



ANNOTATIONS  
ON  
SELECTED POEMS FROM  
PALGRAVE'S GOLDEN TREASURY

(as prescribed for the B. A. Examinations of 1917 &c)

WITH EXAMINATIONS QUESTIONS

N. G. CHATTERJĪ, M. Sc.

PROFESSOR, MEERUT COLLEGE.

Published:  
PROVINCIAL BOOK DEPOT

---

1917.



ANNOTATIONS  
ON  
SELECTED POEMS FROM  
PALGRAVE'S GOLDEN TREASURY  
(as prescribed for the B.A. Examinations of 1917 &c.)  
*WITH EXAMINATION QUESTIONS.*

BY  
N. G. CHATTERJI, M. Sc.,  
PROFESSOR, MEERUT COLLEGE

*Second Edition Revised and Enlarged*

Allahabad:  
RAM DAYAL AGARWALA

---

1917.





# NOTES.

166.

## ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER.

(Page 167)./

### Introduction.

In this Sonnet, Keats describes the feelings with which he first read the English translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by Chapman. Keats knew no Greek, and so could not read these poems in the original, though he had often heard of their beauty.

The poet speaks of his reading of literature as a journey through rich countries. In the course of this journey he has passed through many a bright and fertile country ; he has often heard of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* ; but being ignorant of Greek, he has been unable to read these wonderful poems in the original. Now, for the first time, in Chapman's translation, has he been able to perceive the beauty of these poems, and he compares his feelings on this occasion to those of an astronomer who has unexpectedly discovered a new star, or to those feelings with which the Spaniards caught sight of the hitherto unknown Pacific from some height in the straits of Darien.

The poem is a fine tribute paid by one poet to two others—Homer and Chapman. It was composed in 1815, when Keats was only 20 years old.

### Notes.

1. The realms of gold—i.e., the field of Literature. The world's Literature is compared here to a vast continent

divided into many kingdoms or departments, such as poetry, the drama, fiction, &c. "Realms of gold" literally means regions where the explorer may hope to find gold mines, and refers evidently to the department of Poetry, because of its great richness and beauty.

Much have I travelled in the realms of gold—i.e., I have read a good deal of Literature,

2 Goodly—beautiful. States—countries.

States and kingdoms—i.e., works of literature.

Seen—read.

3. Western islands—"The Western Isles" was a name commonly used by the ancients to denote the Hesperides. The earthly paradise was generally imagined to lie westward beyond the Straits of Gibraltar and the Atlantic Ocean. But probably Keats here means 'the English and Latin poets.'

4 Bards—poets. Fealty—allegiance.

Apollo—the god of music and poetry.

5. One wide expanse—one long poem.

6 Deep-browed—A very graphic epithet. The pictures we possess of Homer show him to have been a man with high, overhanging eyebrows.

Homer—the earliest of Greek poets, famous as the author of two epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Demesne—estate; territory. Homer is spoken of as a king, and the poems he wrote, as the territory over which he ruled.

7 Yet—though I had often heard of it, I had never seen it.

Breathe the pure serene—live in its pure calm atmosphere.

N.B.—'Serene' is here an adjective used as a noun, meaning 'serene atmosphere.'

8 Chapman—George Chapman (1557—1634) was an English poet and dramatist who translated Homer's *Iliad*.

and *Odyssey* into English rhyming verse, the former into long lines of seven iambic feet, the latter into the ordinary heroic couplet.

Loud and bold—in full and stirring strains. Chapman's translation retains much of the Homeric fire and swiftness of movement.

9. Then—i.e., when I read Chapman's translation.

Watcher of the skies—(a poetic periphrasis for) 'an astronomer.'

10. New—discovered for the first time.

Swims into his ken—appears in his view—floating in ethereal space.

*N B*—The word 'swims' very appropriately describes the tremulous, unsteady light with which a star seems to shine in the distance; it looks as though it were floating or swimming in a fluid.

11. Like—i.e., I felt like

Cortez—Hernando Cortez, the conqueror of Mexico, (1485—1554), a celebrated Spanish adventurer, who in 1511 accompanied Velaquez in his expedition to Cuba, and displayed so much skill and bravery in the conquest of that island that he was chosen to conduct a similar enterprise against Mexico, which he conquered in 1519.

Keats has here made a mistake. It was not Cortez but Vasco Balboa, a Spanish navigator, who discovered the Pacific Ocean in 1513.

Eagle eyes—sharp far-seeing gaze.

12. Stared out—looked with wonder on.

The Pacific—Vasco de Balboa was a poor Spanish gentleman who was one of the first who visited the West Indies. He settled on the coast of Panam, where he built a town. In 1513 he crossed the isthmus, he and his party being the first white men who had seen the Pacific Ocean from the American coast, and returned next year with immense riches.

13. Wild surmise—wondering guess.

14. Silent—speechless with wonder.

Peak—hill-top

Darien—in the Isthmus of Panama, connecting North and South America. It is traversed by a range of mountains, forming the boundary between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

#### Explanation.

I have read a good deal of Literature and gone through a good many beautiful works belonging to all branches of literature; I have also read many English and Latin poems, which are acknowledged as masterpieces. I have often heard of one long poem said to have been composed by Homer; but I never read it till I saw Chapman's spirited translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. And then the pleasure I felt was like the joy which an astronomer feels at discovering a new planet, or like the joy with which Cortez and his companions looked upon the Pacific Ocean for the first time, as they stood in speechless wonder on a peak in Darien, staring at each other's face, happy yet doubtful if it were indeed the Pacific Ocean that they were looking upon.

---

177.

### THE LOST LOVE.

(Page 179).

#### Introduction.

This and the two following poems are on "Lucy Gray"—an imaginary maiden whom Wordsworth represents as his beloved. She is here depicted not as a renowned beauty, but a maiden who was nourished into perfection by Nature. Whether "Lucy" stands for any actual woman can never be determined, but in all probability she is only an ideal, having existence not in the outward world but in the poet's mind.

The Lucy poems were composed at Goslar, in Germany, in 1799, and published soon after.

## Notes.

The Lost Love—my deceased beloved.

1. She—viz., Lucy.

Untrodden ways—unfrequented paths.

2. Beside—by the side of ; in the neighbourhood of.

Springs—i e., source.

Dove—a tributary of the river Trent, forming a great part of the boundary between the counties of Stafford and Derby.

3. Maid—maiden ; Parse as case in apposition with ' she ' in l. 1.

Whom there was none to praise—who had no admirers

4. And very few to love—who had no suitors.

5. Violet—a kind of sweet-scented English flower.

By=blossoming by the side of.

Mossy stone—a rock grown over with moss—a kind of green slimy stuff that grows on exposed rocks and buildings in course of time.

6. Half-hidden from the eye—but partially visible.

Lucy is compared to a violet blooming by the side of a mossy rock, from where it is but imperfectly visible, because she was a village maiden living in an obscure part of the country, and known only to a few people. She was not a fashionable beauty of London, "the observed of all observers."

7. Fair as—she was as beautiful as.

9. Unknown—in obscurity.

10. Ceased to be—died.

12. O ! the difference to me—alas ! her death has made a sad change in my life ; my life has become most miserable in consequence of her death.

N B —Of Milton's *Lycidas*—

' But oh ! the heavy change now thou art gone '

14. Silent—speechless with wonder.

Peak—hill-top

Darien—the Isthmus of Panama, connecting North and South America. It is traversed by a range of mountains, forming the boundary between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

### Explanation

I have read a good deal of Literature and gone through a good many beautiful works belonging to all branches of literature, I have also read many English and Latin poems, which are acknowledged as masterpieces. I have often heard of one long poem said to have been composed by Homer; but I never read it till I saw Chapin's spirited translation of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. And then the pleasure I felt was like the joy which an astronomer feels at discovering a new planet, or like the joy with which Cortez and his companions looked upon the Pacific Ocean for the first time, as they stood in speechless wonder on a peak in Darien, staring at each other's face, happy yet doubtful if it were indeed the Pacific Ocean that they were looking upon.

---

177.

### THE LOST LOVE.

(Page 179).

#### Introduction.

This and the two following poems are on "Lucy Gray"—an imaginary maiden whom Wordsworth represents as his beloved. She is here depicted not as a renowned beauty, but a maiden who was nourished into perfection by Nature. Whether "Lucy" stands for any actual woman can never be determined; but in all probability she is only an ideal, having existence not in the outward world but in the poet's mind.

The Lucy poems were composed at Goslar, in Germany, in 1799, and published soon after.

## Notes.

The Lost Love—my deceased beloved.

1. She—*viz.*, Lucy.

Untrodden ways—unfrequented paths.

2. Beside—by the side of ; in the neighbourhood of.  
Springs—*i e*, source.

Dove—a tributary of the river Trent, forming a great part of the boundary between the counties of Stafford and Derby.

3. Maid—maiden ; Parse as case in apposition with ' she ' in l. 1.

Whom there was none to praise—who had no admirers

4. And very few to love—who had no suitors.

5. Violet—a kind of sweet-scented English flower.

By=blossoming by the side of.

Mossy stone—a rock grown over with moss—a kind of green slimy stuff that grows on exposed rocks and buildings in course of time.

6 Half-hidden from the eye—but partially visible.

Lucy is compared to a violet blooming by the side of a mossy rock, from where it is but imperfectly visible, because she was a village maiden living in an obscure part of the country, and known only to a few people. She was not a fashionable beauty of London, "the observed of all observers"

7. Fair as—she was as beautiful as.

9. Unknown—in obscurity.

10 Ceased to be—died.

12. O ! the difference to me—alas ! her death has made a sad change in my life ; my life has become most miserable in consequence of her death.

N B —Of Milton's *Lycidas*—

' But oh ! the heavy change now thou art gone.'



## Explanation

Lucy lived in an obscure village near the banks of the river Dove, not far from its source. She was a maiden of rustic charms, who had no admirers, no suitors. She was a village girl known only to few people, not a fashionable town beauty, and as such she was like a violet blooming by the side of a moss-grown rock from where it is but partially visible. She had no rivals, and as such she may be compared to a star shining alone in the sky. She lived in obscurity and died in obscurity; but her death has wrought a sad change in my life, rendering it most unhappy.

---

178,

(Page 180).

1. Among unknown men—among foreign people.
2. Lands beyond the sea—transmarine countries.
3. Till then—i.e., till I had left your shores
4. What love I bore to thee—how strongly I loved you.
5. 'Tis past—'It' here stands for what follows—'that melancholy dream'
- Melancholy dream—sad recollection.
6. Quit thy shore—leave home
7. A second time—again.
- Still—always. 'Still' frequently means 'always' in poetry.
- 10 The joy of my desire—my happy love (for Lucy)
11. She I cherished—she whom I most loved—viz, Lucy.  
Her wheel—i.e., her spinning wheel. Upto quite recently, handloom weaving and cotton spinning formed part of the regular occupation of English women of the middle class, as it still is in India.
12. Fire—fireplace; i.e., home,

13. Showed—revealed to sight.

Concealed—hid from sight.

14. Bowers—shady groves.

15 Thine too—also English.

The last green field.....surveyed—i.e., the spot where Lucy died.

### Explanation.

I proceeded on a tour through foreign countries, and then only did I come to feel how deeply I loved my native land. That pang of home-sickness is now gone, and I am determined not to leave home again, for my love for my home is always growing stronger and stronger. It was among the mountains of England that I first felt the happiness of love; it was in an English home that she whom I loved most (namely, Lucy) lived and performed her household spinning. It is England that contains the shady groves where Lucy used to play as a girl, and the spot where Lucy died is also situated in England.

---

179.

## THE EDUCATION OF NATURE.

(Page 180).

This poem describes the kind of education best adapted to form an ideal female character. There is to be nothing artificial, nothing conventional in such an education; everything is to be ordered by Nature. Her principles of conduct, her laws of morality, even her recreations and amusements are to be derived from Nature. Her beauty of form is also to be shaped by natural agencies—clouds, storms, stars, rivers

Ruskin says about this poem that it describes “in a few syllables the completion of womanly beauty,” and finishes up his admirable criticism of the poem with the following remarks:—

“Thus, then, you have first to mould her physical frame, and then, as the strength she gains will permit you, to fill

and temper her mind with all knowledge and thoughts which tend to confirm its natural instincts of justice, and refine its natural tact of love."

### Notes.

1. Three years—*for* three years.

In sun and shower—in dry and in wet weather ; in all seasons.

2 A lovelier flower.....sown—*i.e.*, a more beautiful child than Lucy was never born.

Lucy is compared to a flower (1) because of her beauty ; (2) because of her *natural* education

4 To myself will take—shall adopt as my own.

5. She shall be mine—' Shall ' here denotes promise on the part of the speaker.

6 A lady of my own—an ideal woman from Nature's point of view.'

Explanation : Stanza 1 —Upto the age of three, Lucy lived in the free open air of the country, and then Nature said, " A more beautiful child than Lucy was never born in the world. I shall adopt this child as my own, and bring her up myself, so as to make her an ideal woman from Nature's point of view."

7 My darling—my dear child, Lucy.

8 Both law and impulse—*i.e.*, her principles of conduct as well as her instinctive desires and feelings.

With me—in my company.

9. In rock and plain—through hills and dales.

10. Heaven—the sky.

Glade—an opening in a forest.

Bower—a cluster of trees forming a cool shade.

11 An overseeing power—a supervising agency—*viz.*, Nature, watching everything.

12. Kindle—rouse her to activity. This word agrees with ' impulse ' in line 8.

**Restrain**—impose checks on her conduct. This word agrees with 'law' in line 8.

**Explanation: Stanza 2.**—Nature will furnish her with the necessary principles of conduct as well as with her instinctive desires and feelings. In everything that surrounds her,—the hills and dales, the earth and sky, the forest glades and shady groves—she will, under the influence of Nature, perceive the existence of God watching over all; and both her activities and her inactivities will be prompted by the feeling that God is watching her.

**13. Sportive**—playful.

**Fawn**—the young one of a deer.

**14. Glee**—joy. **Lawn**—a spot of ground covered with grass.

**15 Springs**—leaps.

**16. Breathing balm**—the soothing sweetness that breathes or emanates from natural objects.

*N B*—'Balm' originally meant simply 'perfume' It then came to mean anything soothing or refreshing to the senses

**17 The silence and the calm**—the peace and tranquillity.

**18. Mute insensate things**—natural objects—such as hills, meadows, forests, lakes, &c. They are called 'mute' because they cannot speak, and 'insensate' because they are lifeless

**Explanation: Stanza 3.**—She will be as playful as a young deer that leaps joyfully through a glade or up the slopes of a hill. She will imbibe the soothing sweetness that emanates from natural objects as well as their peace and tranquillity.

**19. State**—dignity; stateliness.

**Lend**—impart; communicate

**20. For her the willow bend**—the movement of the willow shall serve as a model to teach her true grace.

**21. Nor shall she fail to see**—she shall also learn.

23 Grace—beauty of movement.

Mould—shape

24. Silent sympathy—unconscious imitation.

Explanation: Stanza 4.—She shall learn dignity from the clouds sweeping majestically in the sky. She shall learn true grace from the movement of the willow. She shall silently sympathise with storms even, and learn beauty of gait from their wild motions.

25. Of midnight—that shine at midnight.

Shall be dear to her—i.e., I will teach her to love the stars.

26 Lean her ear—attentively listen.

28 Rivulets—little streams.

Dance their wayward round—flow in a zigzag current.

29 Born of murmuring sound—associated with the music of nature.

30. Pass into her face—be reflected in the beauty of her countenance.

Explanation: Stanza 5.—She shall be fond of watching the stars at midnight, in order to imbibe their majestic calm and beauty. She shall also listen attentively to the soft murmur of little streams flowing through unfrequented places in a zigzag current; and that pure loveliness which is associated with the sweet music of nature shall be reflected in the beauty of her countenance.

31 Vital feelings of delight—natural joys such as are necessary to very life,—as opposed to sensual pleasures, which are destructive of life.

32 Rear—raise; make it grow.

Stately height—majestic stature

34 Such thoughts—thoughts untainted by any kind of impurity.

35. While she and I together live—as long as Lucy lives under the influence of Nature.

36. Dell—valley.

**Explanation: Stanza 6.**—And under the influence of that pure sort of joy which promotes life, Lucy's body shall grow so as to assume a majestic stature; and from a girl she will grow into a young woman. Her thoughts shall be free from all taint as long as she lives under the influence of Nature in this happy valley.

37 Spake—the old form of 'spoke'

The work was done—Lucy's education was complete in the manner that Nature had laid down.

38. Race was run—i.e., she died.

40 Heath—a tract of country overgrown with coarse grass.

41. Memory of what has been—the happy recollections of the past.

**Explanation: Stanza 7.**—The above was the plan that Nature followed in the education of Lucy, which was completed in due course. But alas! her life was brief. She died, and I am left to mourn her loss amidst this heath, this peaceful retreat, and to brood over the happy recollections of the past—the past that will never recur.

---

180.

(Page 181).

Introduction.

This poem is a continuation of the last. In it the poet gives expression to his feelings of sorrow at Lucy's death. In his desolation he remembers how she whom he mourns had seemed to him, while yet alive, to be an immortal being—nay, one that was not subject even to earthly decline and decay.

## Notes

1. **Slumber**—sleep; *i.e.*, a sense of security such as one enjoys during sleep.

**Spirit**—soul    **Seal**—bind.

A slumber did my spirit seal—my soul was locked up in a kind of sleep; that is, my strong love for Lucy had lulled me into a false sense of security, so that I never suspected that there was any risk of my ever losing her.

2. **Human fears**—fears of death or loss such as haunt all men.

3. **She**—*viz*, Lucy.

Could not feel—was not subject to.

4. **The touch of earthly years**—the change and decay that Time brings with it.

5. **Motion**—power of locomotion.

Now—since she is dead.    **Force**—any other power.

6. **She neither hears nor sees**—she is dead.

7. **Diurnal course**—daily motion; the Earth's rotation round its axis is referred to, and since this motion takes  $24\frac{1}{2}$  hours it is called the Earth's *diurnal* motion.

**Rolled round in earth's diurnal course.....trees**—This means simply that Lucy has now become a part of nature, having no individual existence, but merged in the sublime impersonal grandeur of nature.

*N B*—For a similar sentiment, *Cf.* Tennyson—

"Thy voice is on the rolling air,  
I hear thee where the waters run,  
Thou standest in the rising sun,  
And in the setting thou art fair"

—*In Memoriam*.

## Explanation.

While Lucy was alive, my love for her was so strong that it had lulled me into a false sense of security, so that I never suspected that there was any risk of my ever losing her. In my enchantment she appeared to me to be an

immortal creature, that was not subject to the change and decay that Time brings with it. Now that Lucy is dead and has lost her powers of hearing and sight, she has become part of nature, having no individual existence, but merged in the sublime, impersonal grandeur of nature—the great revolving globe of earth.

---

188.

## TO THE NIGHT.

(Page 188).

*Prayer* Introduction.

This is an invocation to Night. The poet personifies Night, and asks it to come quickly.

### Notes

1. The western wave—the Atlantic Ocean, which in English literature is often called “the western main” Night is asked to walk over the western sea because it is in the west that the sun sets, and Night may therefore be rightly spoken of as coming from across “the western wave”

2 Spirit of Night—Night is personified and spoken of as an angel.

3. Misty—dark.

Eastern cave—This “eastern cave” is supposed by the poet to be the home of Night. The poetic image is true in point of fact ; for as soon as the sun rises in the east, the same regions become enveloped in the darkness of the night on the other side of the globe. The cave is called ‘misty,’ because everything about Night is dark.

4. Lone—lonely. Daylight is called ‘lonely’ because during the time it is day for us, night prevails over the other hemisphere, where therefore all is calm and quiet.

5. Wovest—i.e., didst construct.

Dreams—because Night is associated with sleep and sleep with dreams.



Of joy and fear—pleasing as well as dreadful. There are two kinds of dreams—those that are agreeable, and those that cause horror—the latter being called ‘nightmares.’

6. Terrible and dear—an object of fear as well as love—*fear*, in so far as it causes nightmares, and *love*, so far as it produces pleasant dreams.

7. Swift be thy flight!—may thy coming be quick!

Explanation: Stanza 1.—Come quick, across the western sea, O Night! Leave thy abode, that dark cave in the east, where all through the hivelong day, and all alone thou preparest dreams in order to send them to sleeping people. These dreams are both pleasing and horrible, and this makes thee an object of love as well as fear. May thy coming be quick!

8. Wrap—clothe. Form—figure.

Mantle grey—dark cloak. Everything about Night being dark, her cloak is also called ‘grey.’

9. Star in-wrought—ornamented with stars, as though it were set with jewels

10. Blind with thy hair.....day—i.e., spread thy dark tresses so as to conceal the daylight

11 Kiss—touch gently—referring, to the gradual soft approach of night

Wearied out—induced to retire through fatigue.

12. Wander o’er—spread over.

13 Opiate—producing sleep

Wand—a short stick such as that used by wizards. The effect of Night’s wand is that its touch produces sleep.

14 Long-sought—I have wished thee to come for a long time

Explanation: Stanza 2.—Clothe thy figure in a dark cloak ornamented with blazing stars like jewels. Spread thy dark tresses across the face of Day, so as to conceal the daylight. Meet the Day with kisses so oft-repeated as to

induce her to retire through fatigue ; and when she has retired, then mayest spread over the world, sending everybody to sleep. Come quick ; I have been expecting thee long.

15 Arose—rose from bed.

16. Sighed for thee—was sorry that the night had departed.

17. When light rode high—at noon.

Was gone—had dried up or evaporated in the heat of the sun.

18. Lay heavy—hung drowsily.

19. Turned to his rest—was about to close ; i.e., in the evening

20 Lingered like an unloved guest—appearing to me to be slow to depart like an unwelcome visitor.

21. Sighed for thee—longed for thee to come.

Explanation : Stanza 3.—When I got up from bed and saw that the day had dawned, when the morning was far advanced and the dew had dried up ; when the noon was hanging drowsily, on flowers and trees, when the sun was about to set but seemed yet to delay its departure like an unwelcome visitor, at all these times I longed for thy approach.

NB — This stanza refers to four successive periods of day-time—(1) early dawn, (2) forenoon, (3) midday, (4) evening

22. Thy brother death—death which is very like Night, because both are marked by unconsciousness

23. Thy sweet child Sleep—sleep, which is the soothing product of Night. ✓

24. Wouldst thou me ?—dost thou wish for me ?

Filmy-eyed—because it spreads a haze over the eyes. *of*  
Sleep is here compared to a bat. *gutter*

25. Murmured—spoke softly. Noon-tide—mid-day.

26. Nestle—lie comfortably as a young bird in its nest.

Explanation : Stanza 4.—Death which resembles Night came and asked me if I wished for him. Sleep, the soothing product of Night, spoke softly—humming like a bee at mid-day—and asked me whether I wanted her to lie comfortably by my side and whether I wished for her ; and I replied in the negative to both.

29 When thou art dead—when Night has ceased to be a fact for me.

30. Soon, too soon—and that will be soon enough ; death cannot be far-off for me.

32. Of neither—neither of Death nor of sleep.

Boon—favour ; viz , of coming soon.

Explanation : Stanza 5.—Death will come when Night has lost all interest for me, and that cannot be far-off. Sleep will come when the night is past—for I can get no sleep by night. But it is neither from Death nor from Sleep that I solicit the favour I ask of you—to come soon, as soon as possible.

---

189.

## TO A DISTANT FRIEND.

(Page 189).

### Introduction.

The following, from the note prefixed by the poet to this sonnet (without date) in the collected edition, will serve as a fitting introduction to this poem :—

“ In the month of January, when Dora and I were walking from Town-end, Grasmere, across the vale, snow being on the ground, she espied, in the thick though leafless hedges, a bird’s nest half filled with snow. Out of this comfortless appearance arose this sonnet, which was, in fact, written without the least reference to any individual object, but merely to prove to myself that I could, if I thought fit, write in a strain that poets have been fond of.”

## Notes.

1. Why art thou silent?—why have you not written to me for a long time?

A plant of such weak fibre—such a frail and fickle feeling.

2. Treacherous—*i.e.*, uncertain.

Air—weather. The metaphor of the plant is continued.

3 Withers what was once so fair—should have the effect of weakening your love which was formerly so strong.

4. Is their—a misprint for “is there.”

No debt to pay—no friendly obligations to discharge.

No boon to grant—no favour to confer; no friendly services to render.

5. Yet—although you have been silent, yet.

Vigilant—watchful.

6. Bound to thy service—*anxious to serve thee.*

Unceasing—constant.

7. The mind's—*i.e.*, my mind's.

Least generous—most selfish.

Mendicant—beggar; a friar or monk who makes his living by begging.

8. Nought—nothing.

But—except; parse as a preposition. Spare—afford to give away.

9. Soft—tender. Warm—loving. Free—*sc.* from doubt and anxiety.

Once—formerly, *viz.*, when you were not so indifferent.

11. Desolate—lonely.

Dreary cold—forsaken and loveless.

12. A forsaken bird's-nest, &c.—See Introduction.

13. Leafless—bare,—because it was the winter season when most trees in England shed their leaves.

Eglantine—the sweet brier.

14. That—so that. Torturing—painful.

Doubts—*sc.*, about the sincerity of his friend's love.

Their end may know—may cease.

## Explanation.

Why have you not written to me for such a long time? Is your friendship so fickle and frail that separation has the effect of impairing its strength—that “out of sight” makes a friend “out of mind” for you? Are you not conscious of any friendly obligation that you have to discharge or any friendly services that you have to render? But in spite of your silence I have been constantly thinking of you, always anxious to do you service. Even my most selfish wishes have only sought for what you could give without inconveniencing your own happiness. Let me know the reason of your silence, however much may be my pain at feeling thus deserted by you, though formerly my heart was tenderly attached to you and full of love for you, whereas now it is more lonely, more loveless than a deserted bird’s-nest, filled with snow and hanging in a bush of bare eglantine. Yes, let me know the cause of your silence, in order that my painful doubts about the sincerity of your love may cease.

---

 199.

## THE TERROR OF DEATH.

(Page 198).

This Sonnet was written by Keats not later than January, 1818. It is the most Shakespearean of his sonnets, not only in the peculiar ring of the opening lines, but also in rhythm, in richness of language and in its happy imagery.

The central thought of the sonnet is the fear of premature death, that death that might deprive the poet of the chance of giving full expression to the thoughts and feelings of his maturer mind, and of the enjoyment of his love for his beloved. At such times,—when the fear of an untimely death overpowers his mind—he feels a sense of loneliness in which all interest in poetic fame or romantic love is lost.

The Sonnet is probably addressed to Keats' mistress—Fanny Browne.

### Notes.

1. Cease to be—die.

2. Before my pen.....brain—*i.e.*, before I have time to write down in books all the thoughts and feelings of my mind. The metaphor is taken from harvesting.

Gleaned—gathered grain by grain.

Teeming—*i.e.*, containing a plentiful supply of thoughts and ideas.

3. High piled books—thick volumes.

Charactery—written symbols. Hold in charactery = 'contain a written record of.'

4. Garner—a storehouse for corn ; granary.

Full-ripened grain—the mature thoughts and ideas of my mind. Books, as containing a record of a man's mature thoughts and ideas, are compared here to granaries holding a large stock of ripe grain.

5. Starred—studded or lit with stars.

6. Cloudy symbols—indistinct signs ; faint traces.

High romance—a deep mystery—*viz.*, the mystery of the universe, of infinite space and infinite Time.

*N B.*—The vast expanse of the sky studded with innumerable stars at night is to the poet an indistinct sign of the infinitude of the universe.

7. Trace—depict—in my books.

8. Shadows—images.. Magic—mysterious ; invisible

Hand of chance—the hand of the poet which to him seems to be directed by an unseen power, which he modestly calls chance.

9. Fair creature of an hour—an ephemeral insect that I am.

*N B*—This phrase is case in apposition to 'I.'

10. Thee—probably Fanny Browne, Keats' beloved.

11. Have relish in—enjoy.

Fairy power—magical influence ; subtle charm.

12. Unreflecting—thoughtless ; which never ponders upon consequences, and is therefore desperately strong.

13. Shore—brink ; edge ; terminus

Alone—in loneliness ; feeling all my connections with the world cut off.

Think—am lost in thought ; buried in thought.

14. Love—*sc.*, for Fanny Browne.

Fame—poetic renown.

To nothingness do sink—lose all their charm for me ; appear utterly insignificant in my eyes.

Explanation.

Whenever the fear comes to me that I may die before I have time to record in writing the large store of thoughts and feelings in my mind, that is, before I have time to embody in bulky volumes my mature thoughts and ideas ; when gazing at the starry sky at night I see therein indistinct emblems of the immensity of Space and the eternity of Time, and feel that I may die before I have time to depict their images in my writings, my hand being guided thereto by an unseen power which I may call chance, and when I feel,—poor mortal as I am, with but a brief span of life allotted to me—that I may die before seeing *thee* any more, and that I may never enjoy the happiness of thoughtless love ; under these circumstances I seem to myself as standing lonely upon the edge or brink of the world—as if about to quit it, and then love for thee and the promise of poetic renown both lose all their interest for me.

---

200.

DESIDERIA.

(Page 198)

Introduction

The title of this Sonnet is in Latin, and means 'long-

ings' or 'affections.' It refers to Wordsworth's daughter Catherine, who died in 1812, at the age of three. De Quincey, who was very fond of the little child, has left some account of her in his *Reminiscences*. This sonnet to her memory was written many years after her death, and is a remarkable proof of the poet's strong affection for his deceased girl.

### Notes.

1. Surprised—suddenly overtaken.

Joy—the poet's joy at the birth of a daughter.

Impatient as the wind—feeling most impatient to see the new born babe.

*N.B*—The wind is not a type of impatience, as Wordsworth has represented it here, but of fickleness or variability

2. Turned—proceeded.

Share the transport—participate my happiness.

3 O with whom but thee—of course with thee. 'Thee' probably refers to his wife—the mother of this girl

Deep buried.....tomb—alas! now dead and gone. This refers to the daughter. The construction is confused, reflecting the confusion brought on by excess or emotion.

4. That spot—*viz*, the child's grave.

Vicissitude—human change of joy or grief.

Find—identify.

5 Faithful—unchanging; constant.

Recalled thee to my mind—reminded me of thee.

6. But how could I forget thee?—but as a matter of fact it is impossible for me to forget thee.

*N B*—The word "recalled," in the preceding line, would naturally imply that the poet had forgotten her, and it is to remove this impression that he adds the remark—"But how could I forget thee?"

7. Least division—smallest fraction. The least division of an hour—a moment.

8. Beguiled—forgetful. Blind to—unconscious of.



9. Grievous—painful    Loss—*sc.*, of his daughter.  
 That thought's return—the recollection of thy death.
10. Worst pang—most painful shock of grief.
11. Save one—except one other—*viz.*, the first pang of grief when he knew first that his child was dead.
- Forlorn—in despair.
12. My heart's best treasure—my dearest object of love.
- No more—dead.
13. Years unborn—the future.
14. Could to my sight.....restore—could bring me back my lost child.

#### Explanation.

Having suddenly received the happiness of a child being born to my wife, I hastened impatiently to have a look at the new-born babe, and to participate my happiness with her. Alas ! thou art dead,—dead long ago, and buried in the grave at a spot which no human changes of joy or sorrow can identify. My love for thee, which is still strong, reminded me of thee, though as a matter of fact, I never forgot thee. Nothing could have power to make me so forgetful as not to feel my sad bereavement even for a single moment. The recollection of thee was the most painful shock of grief that I ever experienced, except only once, *viz.*, when I felt the first pang of grief at hearing that my child was dead.

On that occasion I felt absolutely hopeless at learning that my most beloved child was dead, and that neither now nor ever hereafter shall I see her again.

---

208.

# ODE TO DUTY.

(Page 207).

## Introduction

This poem was written in 1805, and first published in 1807. Wordsworth's own preface to the poem is :—

“ This Ode is on the model of Gray's *Ode to Adversity*, which is copied from Horace's *Ode to Fortune*. Many and many a time have I been twitted by my wife and sister for having forgotten this dedication of myself to the stern law-giver. Transgressor indeed I have been from hour to hour, from day to day : I would fain hope, however, not more flagrantly, or in a worse way, than most of my trueful brethren. But these last words are in a wrong strain. We should be rigorous to ourselves' and forbearing, if not indulgent, to others ; and if we make comparison at all, it ought to be with those who have morally excelled us.”

As a motto to this Poem, Wordsworth prefixed a Latin quotation, the meaning of which is—‘ I am no longer good by mere resolve, but have by long habit reached such a point that not only can I do right but that I cannot do anything but right’

The *Ode to Duty* is a great poem, not only because of the soundness of its moral teaching, but because the poet has given to the abstract conception of Duty the living personification of poetry. The poem affirms that between the lower and higher parts of man's nature there commonly exists an antagonism. A few fortunate souls may escape this struggle, and, under the direction of the inner law of conscience, may, at least for a time, proceed along the path of virtue ; but even these cannot be depended upon. For the path of virtue is for the most part a rough and thorny path, and men can enjoy peace and happiness only when they proceed along this path in obedience to a divine

law. To find true freedom they must owe obedience to such a law.

The central thought of the Poem is that Duty is the one thing that gives dignity to human life.

#### Notes.

1. Stern—unyielding ; because Duty allows no exception, makes no compromise.

Daughter of the voice of God—echo of the divine word

2. If that name thou love—if you prefer to be called by the name of 'Duty' (being the daughter of the voice of God).

3. A light to guide—Just as a lamp guides us in the darkness of night, in the same way the sense of duty guides us through the doubts and difficulties of life.

Rod—a stick used for punishing offenders.

4. Check the erring—restrain people from wrong.

Reprove—admonish, reproach.

5. Victory—i.e., Duty enables us to conquer temptations.

Law—i.e., it furnishes us with a body of sound principles to act upon.

6. Empty terrors—groundless fears.

Overawe—terrorise

7. Vain temptations—idle seductions,—such as those of pleasure

Set free—release.

8. Calm'st—dost pacify.

Weary—i.e., long ; ceaseless

Strife—i.e., the moral struggle between right and wrong

Frail humanity—men who are naturally weak.

Explanation : Stanza 1.—Duty is a principle of conduct that is of divine origin. It knows no exception and makes no compromise. I am not sure if 'Duty' is a proper

name for this God-given rule, which guides us in the doubts and difficulties of life in the same way as a lamp shows us our path in darkness. It also serves as an instrument of punishment in restraining people from wrong-doing and in rebuking them. It enables us to conquer temptations and furnishes us with a sound principle of action whenever we are overcome by a sense of false fear. It makes men rise above idle seductions of all kinds, and ensures them peace in the middle of the endless struggles of life.

9. There are who—there are some men who.

Who ask not if thy eye be on them—who do not pause to reflect whether they are acting from a sense of duty or not

10. In love and truth—out of their instinctive love for what is right and their sincere desire to act rightly.

11. Where no misgiving is—without entertaining any doubt

Rely—depend—for the sole motive of action.

12. Genial sense of youth—the warm and kindly impulses characteristic of young people.

13. Glad hearts—happy souls

Without reproach or blot—quite conscientiously.

14. By thy work—perform their duty

And know it not—quite unconsciously.

15. Through—by reason of.

Confidence misplaced—an implicit trust in one's own capacity to do right, which turns out to be false

16. They fail—such men fall off from their duty.

Thy saving arms—*i e*, safety and protection.

Dread power—*viz*, the goddess of Duty.

Around them cast—*i e*, grant them.

Explanation : Stanza 2.—There are some men whose nature is such that they do not pause to reflect whether they are acting from a sense of duty or not. These men are

solely prompted by the warm and kindly impulses of youth, and act rightly out of their instinctive love for what is right, and their sincere desire to follow it. They have no doubt that what they do is right. Such men are indeed happy souls ; they do their duty unconsciously, free from blame and from the sense of guilt. O may the goddess of Duty protect them if they happen to fall off from virtue, by reason of depending too confidently on their own capacity to do right !

17. Serene—peaceful. Days—life. Bright—cheerful.

18. Nature—disposition.

19. When love is an unerring light—if love proves an infallible guide that never leads us into vicious courses.

20. Joy its own security—when pleasures are such that they give us a guarantee of permanence, *i.e.*, they do not lead to intemperance.

21. A blissful course may hold—may enjoy a happy life.

22. Even now—even in this imperfect world.

Not unwisely bold—adventurous but with discretion.

23. Live in the spirit of this creed—practically follow the above rule.

24. Seek thy firm support—*i.e.*, feel the need of invoking the aid of Duty.

According to their need—whenever they think they cannot do without it.

Explanation : Stanza 3.—Our life will be full of peace and joy and our disposition full of happy harmony, when love proves to be an infallible guide to conduct, and when the pleasures enjoyed are such in-quality and so moderate in degree that they are assured of permanence and stability For it is only when love misleads us, and when the pleasures enjoyed are low and excessive that the result is unhappiness. And those men too may lead a happy life even in this imperfect world, who, combining boldness with

discretion, depend as a rule upon the guidance of love and joy but supplement it at times by an appeal to Duty.

25. Loving freedom—being impatient of restraint.

Untried—inexperienced ; being an immature youth.

26. No sport of every random gust—although not entirely carried away by blind impulses

27. Being to myself a guide—acting on my own judgment.

28. Blindly—implicitly.

Reposed my trust—placed confidence in myself.

29. Oft—at times. Heart—i.e., conscience.

30. Mandate—command Deferred—postponed.

31. The task—viz., of obeying thee

In smoother walks to stray—i.e., to enjoy pleasure.

*N B*—The word 'smoother' suggests the ease with which a man can pursue self-indulgence, and the difficulties attending the strict performance of duty.

32. Serve—obey. If I may—if this is possible.

Explanation : Stanza 4.—Owing to my impatience of restraint and owing to my inexperience, I have, under the direction of my own instincts, placed implicit faith in my own powers—though at the same time I must say that I have not been swayed entirely by impulse. And it often happened that when conscience bade me do my duty, I neglected duty and spent time in self-indulgence. But henceforth I have determined to obey the sense of Duty as far as lies in me.

33. Disturbance of my soul—mental perturbation.

34. Compunction—feeling of remorse.

Wrought—produced.

35. Supplicate—pray.

Thy control—being habitually guided by Duty, not by pleasure.

36. In the quietness of thought—i.e., coolly and deliberately.

37. Unchartered freedom—unrestrained liberty. 'Unchartered' literally means 'not regulated by a charter, such as that which regulates the rights and privileges of a citizen.'

Tires me—i.e., I am weary of.

38. I feel the weight—i.e., I find them burdensome.

Chance desires—random passions and appetites.

39. No more must change their name—must henceforth be stable. *firm*

40. Repose—peace.

That ever is the same—which is unchanging or constant.

Explanation: Stanza 5.—It is my prayer to be henceforth guided by the dictates of Duty, not because there has been any conflict in my breast, nor because I have been remorseful of the past, but because I have decided this after mature contemplation. *firm* I am weary of the unrestrained liberty I have so long enjoyed. I am likewise tired of desires springing from mere impulse, not from fixed principles. Henceforth my hopes will no longer be variable and discordant. The peace I now long to enjoy is one that should be unbroken.

41. Stern Lawgiver—i.e., though the rule of duty is a severe one.

42. The Godhead's most benignant grace—the kindest and most merciful aspect of the divine face.

43. Nor know we.....fair—the most beautiful thing in existence.

44. The smile upon thy face—i.e., the approval of Duty.

45. Laugh before thee—smile when they see thee; i.e., Nature looks beautiful to a follower of Duty.

46. Fragrance in thy footing treads—wherever you walk a sweet smell attends your footsteps; i.e., happiness attends the path of the man who does his duty well.

47. Preserve the stars from wrong—make the stars move rightly in their spheres.

48. Through thee—because they obey the law of Duty.

**Explanation :** Stanza 6.—Though the law of duty is a severe one, it is nevertheless most merciful, while there is nothing that can equal the loveliness of Duty's smile; *i.e.*, the happiness that springs when Conscience approves of our conduct is a unique kind of happiness. The beauty of nature is due to her obedience of law, and this law is no other than Duty. Duty is also one with the great physical law that directs and preserves the order of the universe.

49. Humbler functions—a smaller task *viz*, directing my conduct.

Awful power—the goddess of Duty.

50. Commend—entrust; transitive, governing 'myself.'

51. From this hour—henceforth.

52 Let my weakness have an end—*i.e.*, grant me strength of will to obey thee.

53. Lowly wise—wise and at the same time humble.

54. Spirit of self-sacrifice—the desire to give up my own pleasure or interest for the sake of duty.

55. Confidence of reason—trust in my own powers, based on sound sense; opposed to that "misplaced confidence" mentioned in l. 15.

56. In the light of truth—realising my true position.

Bondman—slave; servant.

**Explanation :** Stanza 7.—I summon thee now to occupy thyself with the humble task of directing my conduct. Henceforth do I place myself under the guidance of Duty. May she grant me strength of will to obey her commands; wisdom and humility to give up my own pleasure or interest for the sake of duty; a strong faith in my own powers based on sound sense; and a correct idea of my true position, so that I may always live as the servant of Duty.

---



212.

LONDON, MDCCCII.

(Page 210).

Introduction.

This and the next two Sonnets form an allied group, and must be read together. They were written in the same year, viz., 1802. Their common theme may be expressed in one short phrase—"the degeneracy of the present age."

To understand the full meaning of these Sonnets it is necessary to recall the state of England in 1802, which was such that it might well fill a poet like Wordsworth with dismay. England had grown very rich in trade and commerce; her population had greatly increased; but there was at the same time a greater gulf separating the rich and the poor, than at any time before. The reason of this was that while prices had risen, wages had not, and the working classes were accordingly in great distress. The increase of poverty brought with it its inevitable consequence, an increase of crime.

Wordsworth's own note on these Sonnets is:—

"Written immediately after my return from France to London, when I could not but be struck, as here described, with the vanity and parade of our own country, especially in great towns and cities, as contrasted with the quiet, and I may say the desolation, that the Revolution had produced in France. This must be borne in mind, or else the reader may think that in this and the succeeding sonnets I have exaggerated the mischief engendered and fostered among us by undisturbed wealth."

Read with the above the following criticism on Wordsworth's attitude in these Sonnets, by John Morley:—

"While leading men to pierce below the artificial and conventional to the natural man and natural life, as Rousseau did, Wordsworth still cherished the symbols, the tradi-

tions, and the great institutes of social order. Simplification of life and thought and feeling was to be accomplished without summoning up the dangerous spirit of destruction and revolt. Wordsworth lived, with nature, yet waged no angry war with society."

### Notes.

1. *O Friend*—Wordsworth is not invoking here any particular friend.

Which way.....comfort—where I am likely to obtain consolation.

2. *Opprest*—grieved.

3. *Now*—in this age.

*Drest for show*—ordered so as only to look well ; aimed at display.

4 *Mean handiwork*—trifling article.

*Craftsman*—artisan

5. *Groom*—menial servant.

*NB*—Wordsworth is probably thinking of the proverb which asserts of a worthless man that he is what his tailor has made him

*Run glittering like a brook, &c*—*i.e.*, everything we do should appear as bright and polished as possible

*NB*—A brook sparkling in the sunlight looks very beautiful to the eye, but it is of no use for fertilising the country or for navigation. In the same way men who care only for appearance have no solid worth or utility

6. *Or we are unblest*—otherwise we are damned.

8. *Nature*—*i.e.*, natural scenery. *Book*—*i.e.*, literature

9 *Rapine*—pillage. *Avarice*—greed

*Expense*—lavish expenditure : prodigal waste of money.

10. *This is idolatry*—*i.e.*, rapine, avarice, and expense are blindly worshipped.

*Adore*—worship.

11. *Plain living and high thinking*—This phrase has passed into a proverb : it means 'simplicity of life combined with the pursuit of philosophy.'

*Are no more*—is no longer our ideal.

## 12. Homely beauty—unattractive charms.

The good old cause—devotion to country combined with simplicity in domestic life, which used to be the ideal in former times

## 13. Peace—domestic tranquillity.

Fearful innocence—scrupulous avoidance of wrong.

## 14. Breathing household laws—inspiring domestic peace and security.

## Explanation.

O friend ! I feel most distressed. I am at a loss to think where I may find consolation from the sorrow I feel at the present deplorable state of my country. Englishmen now think that the best kind of life is that which *looks* well, not *lives* well,—an ignoble ideal for any class of artisan, whether cook or menial servant. Our life is to appear bright and polished at the surface, whatever it may be internally ; otherwise we cannot feel happy. The standard of value in these days is wealth. We have ceased to take interest in the beauty of natural scenery, and in literature : all we care for is to plunder others, to cultivate greed, and to live in a lavish style ; and this amounts to our worshipping gold as a god. Simplicity of life combined with the pursuit of noble aims has departed from our midst ; devotion to the good of our country, the peace of well-ordered homes, the timorous avoidance of wrong, the piety that leads to domestic virtue,—these have disappeared from our people.

---

213.

THE SAME.

(Page 211).

Introduction.

This poem, ~~and the~~ foregoing, was composed in 1802, during Wordsworth's brief stay in London after his return from France. It was first published in 1867.

## Notes

1. **Milton !**—Milton is here invoked as a type of plain living and high thinking.

**Thou shouldst.....hour—sc.**, in order to serve as a model to the present generation.

2. **Fen**—a low marshy or flooded tract of land.

3. **Of stagnant waters**—‘water-logged.’

She is a fen of stagnant waters—England has become a dull, unprogressive country, peopled by men whose hearts are insensible to noble aims and aspirations.

**Altar, sword, and pen—i.e.**, the clergyman, the soldier, and the man of letters. Fig. metonymy.

4. **Fireside**—the family.

**Heroic wealth**—the rich nobility. ‘Wealth’ is here abstract for concrete=‘wealthy people.’

“**Of hall and bower—i.e.**, both lords and ladies. In the old baronial castle, the *hall* was the chief room, where visitors were received, meals taken, and so forth; the *bower* was the inner apartment meant for the use of the ladies.

5. **Forfeited**—lost—as a result of their selfishness.

**Ancient**—which they have enjoyed for a long time.

**English dower**—a possession which is the peculiar property of English institutions.

7. **Raise us up**—uplift us from this degradation.

**Return to us again—i.e.**, let the present generation imbibe your lofty character.

8. **Give us—teach us.**

“**Manners**—good manners, based on a sturdy independence and self-respect.

**Virtue**—good character. **Power**—moral influence.

9. **Thy soul was.....apart**—the loftiness and beauty of your character set you above the rest of your fellow-men. Being a man of surpassing excellence of character you were far removed from the common herd.

10. **Voice—i.e.**, style.

Whose sound.....sea—which possessed a majestic dignity resembling the roar of the ocean.

11. Naked heavens—cloudless sky.

'Majestic—dignified.

Free—possessing a natural flow and spontaneity.

12 So—in this manner.

Travel.....way—tread the beaten round of ordinary worldly duties.

13. In cheerful godliness—in the enjoyment of that happiness which comes from purity of character.

And yet—*i.e.*, though you were a man of such pre-eminent excellence of character.

14. Lowest duties—the humblest tasks.

'Herself—itself. Lay—impose.

*N B*—Probably the reference in "lowest duties" is to Milton's occupying himself for seven years in giving private tuition to two of his nephews and to a few other boys of his neighbourhood, from 1639 onward

#### Explanation.

Milton ! I wish you were living to see the degeneracy of the present age. Your country badly 'needs a man of your character just now ; she has become a dull unprogressive country, peopled by men whose hearts have grown insensible to noble aims and aspirations. The Church, the Army, Literature, the Family, the rich nobility, both lords and ladies,—all alike have lost the internal happiness they have so long enjoyed, and which has marked them as peculiarly English. The English people have become a self-seeking race. Shed down your influence so as to elevate their character, and let the present generation imbibe your lofty spirit. Teach them good manners based on genuine nobility of sentiments ; teach them to love and follow the good ; teach them what true liberty consists in ; teach them how to exercise a beneficial influence over others. The loftiness and beauty of your character set you above the rest of your fellow-men. Your style and diction possessed stateliness

and dignity resembling the roar of the ocean; it was as pure as the cloudless sky, and at the same time possessing a peculiar grandeur and spontaneity. It was in this manner that you led your life—trode the beaten round of ordinary worldly duties—in the enjoyment of that happiness which comes from saintliness of character. But though you were a man of such pre-eminent excellence of character, you did not consider it beneath your dignity to undertake some of the humblest of occupations—such as teaching private pupils at home.

---

214.

(Page 211).

Introduction.

This Sonnet hints at a better state of things than that depicted in the preceding two. It seems that since Wordsworth wrote the other two, a change had come over England and the signs of degeneracy noticed by the poet had become modified. Hence in the present sonnet, the poet expresses regret for, and gives an explanation of, the attack he made before.

The student will also notice the distinct inferiority of this Sonnet in poetical merit,—as if the poet's shame had hampered his style.

#### Notes

1. Borne in memory—remembered.

What has tamed—the causes that have brought about that downfall of.

2. Ennobling thoughts—lofty sentiments.

3. Change—exchange. Swords—i.e., national heroism. Ledgers—i.e., 'pursuit of wealth'; literally, 'account books.'

Desert—abandon.

4. Bower—secluded study; closet.

Gold—*i.e.*, money-making.

Fears unnamed—vague apprehensions,

5. I had—I entertained for thee.

Am I to be blamed?—*i.e.*, I think I was quite right in entertaining those fears.

6. What thou art—the change that has come over thee.

7. Verily—truly.

In the bottom of my heart—inwardly.

8. Unfilial—which were unworthy in a child.

9. Prize—cherish ; value

10. Bulwark for the cause of men—a champion of the world's liberty.

11. I by my affection was beguiled—my strong love for you had led me into an error.

12. What wonder if—it is quite natural that.

A Poet—*sc.*, like myself (Wordsworth).

Now and then—occasionally.

13. Movements of his mind—the thoughts and feelings revolving in his mind.

14. As a lover or a child—*i.e.*, the same tender affection that a lover feels for his or her beloved, or that a child feels for its mother.

#### Explanation.

Remembering the causes that have brought about the downfall of great races ; knowing that all nobility of sentiment vanishes from among a people that discard chivalry and betake themselves to the pursuit of wealth, or who abandon the pursuit of knowledge and give themselves up to money-making ;—knowing this I did certainly entertain some vague fears for the future of England. And I think I did so quite justly. Now, however, when I look upon my country and see the change for the better that has come over her, I truly feel ashamed of those fears which were unworthy in a child. For now we find England once more a champion of the civilization of the world, the progress

of humanity. It was my excessive love for my country that had deceived me into thinking that she was proceeding on the wrong path. It is quite natural that a poet like me should occasionally, among his many thoughts and feelings, entertain a tender love for his country—a love akin to that felt by the lover for his or her beloved, or by the child for its mother.

---

 223.

## A LESSON.

(Page 222).

## Introduction.

This poem was written in 1804, and published in 1807. Two other poems were written on the same subject (the Lesser Celandine) in the two preceding years. In a note prefixed to the first of these earlier verses, Wordsworth says:—

“It is remarkable that this flower, coming out so early in the spring as it does, and so bright and beautiful, and in such profusion, should not have been noticed earlier in English verse. What adds much to the interest that attends it is its habit of shutting itself up and opening out according to the degree of light and temperature of the air.”

In this poem Wordsworth draws a moral lesson (hence its title, *A Lesson*) from the habits of the flower. When young, the flower takes ample precaution against the cold and rain, but when getting old, it neglects those precautions, although they are more necessary in the latter age. In this respect, the lesser celandine may be taken as a type of man's folly.

## Notes -

1. The Lesser Celandine—the pilewort—called the lesser celandine to distinguish it from the greater celandine—is a flower of the crowfoot tribe, with yellow star-shaped blossoms and shining green leaves. It opens only on bright days, and closes its flowers at sunset.



2. Many more—other flowers.

3. The first moment that—as soon as.

4. Bright as the sun himself—bright and fair.

'Tis out again—the flower blooms forth again.

5. Swarm on swarm—in repeated showers.

6. Blasts—strong gusts of wind. Distrest—swept.

7. Muffled up from harm—protecting itself from the storm

8. Self-shelter—the shelter of its own leaves.

Like a thing at rest—as if it were asleep.

9. Rough—stormy.

10. Though an altered form—although its shape was changed.

11. Standing forth.....blast—boldly exposing itself to the fury of the storm.

12. Buffeted at will—driven to and fro ; knocked about.

13. With inly muttered voice—in a low tone to myself.

14. Shower—rain.

15. This neither.....choice—it is exposing itself to the rain and the cold, not to show its bravery, nor of its own free will.

16. But its necessity in being old—but because it is obliged by old age to do so.

17. May not cheer it—has no power to gladden it.

18. Cannot help itself—has no power to protect itself.  
Decay—old age.

19. Stiff in its members—being rigid in its limbs.

Withered—with its beauty faded.

Changed of hue—having lost its freshness of colour.

20. Spleen—vexation.

Grey—the colour that suits old men.

21. A prodigal's favourite—In youth we have an excess of health and strength—more, in fact, than we can find use for, in this respect a young man is like the favourite of a spendthrift, whose hands are more full of money than he knows how to spend properly.

Worse truth—To be a prodigal's favourite in youth is bad enough, but in old age we become something worse, namely "a miser's pensioner."

22. A miser's pensioner—i.e., a man who has to be content with the scantiest of pittances. In old age we have just enough of health and strength to make us drag on a miserable kind of existence, and in this respect we may be likened to a miser's pensioner who gets just enough to keep body and soul together.

Behold our lot!—lo! such is the destiny of man.

23 Fair and shining youth—the period of youth when a man has an excess of beauty and strength.

24. Age—old age

The things youth needed not—only the superfluous part of thy strength and gaiety

#### Explanation

There is a flower called the Lesser Celandine which, like many other flowers, folds up its petals to protect itself from the cold and rain, but as soon as the sun shines, it reappears in its original freshness and beauty.

Often during a thick shower of hailstones, or when a storm was sweeping the fields and trees, I have seen this flower with its pearls gathered up, and sheltering itself among its own leaves, without even feeling the motion of the storm.

But recently one stormy day, I passed one such flower, and then knew that it was the lesser celandine, although its shape was changed, on this occasion, however, I saw it boldly exposing itself to the fury of the storm, and knocked to and fro by the rain and the wind.

I passed and said in a low tone to myself, "This flower's nature is to shun the rain and the cold; it is exposing itself, not to show its bravery, nor of its own free will, but because it is obliged by old age to do so. The sunshine and the morning dew are unable to gladden it now; it has become helpless in its old age—rigid in its limbs, faded in its beauty, robbed of its freshness of colour."

In my vexation I smiled and noticed that its changed colour was grey—the colour that we associate with old age. From this circumstance I drew the following moral lesson:—Just as the celandine, while young, is able to protect itself from rain and cold, but is unable to do so in old age, when it needs that protection most,—in the same way man in youth enjoys an excess of health and strength, but is deprived of both just in that age when he needs them most. I wish that man could spare a little of his youth's superfluous health and energy to serve him in old age.

---

226.

### INVOCATION.

(Page 225).

This poem was written about 1819. It is an invocation to the Spirit of Joy,—a mild reproach for not having visited the poet for a long time, and for the wayward manner in which she bestows her favours on those who have already enough to make them happy; and concludes with the appeal, 'O come! Make once more my heart thy home!'

#### Notes.

1. Rarely, rarely—very seldom indeed.
2. Spirit of Delight—Joy is here personified and spoken of as a Spirit or Angel.

NOTE—In regard to Shelley's personifications, a critic observes—"Personifications of Day, Night, Sleep, Death, Joy, Sorrow are common enough in the English poets in imitation of classical poetry, but they are apt to be frigid. The remarkable thing about Shelley's personifications is that they are more real to him than their ancient

counterparts were to the great majority of the classical poets themselves."

3. Wherefore—why.

5-6. Many a weary.....away—it is a long time since my life became devoid of joy.

7. One like me—a wretched creature like myself.

8. Win thee back again—regain my lost happiness.

9. The joyous and the free—happy souls who are free from cares.

10. Scoff at pain—despise sorrow.

11. False—deceitful or treacherous.

Thou hast forgot.....not—*i.e.*, you bestow your favours on those who are already happy and stand in no need of your bounty.

*Note—Cf Bible—“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance, but whosoever hath not from him shall be taken away even that he hath”*

—*Matthew, xiii 12*

13. As a lizard with—just as a lizard is dismayed with or frightened by

15. Thou with sorrow art dismayed—*i.e.*, you shun a person in grief, as though you were afraid of him.

16. Even the sighs of grief—even the mildest expression of sorrow.

17. That thou art not near—that you do not come to give him relief

18. Reproach.....hear—reproach has no effect upon you.

19. Mournful ditty—plaintive song

20. Merry measure—joyful tune.

21. For pity—out of pity for the sorrow-stricken.

22. For pleasure—to participate in the joy of happy people.

23. Pity then will.....stay—*i.e.*, when thou hast once come, pity will induce thee to stay on.

27. The fresh earth in new leaves drest—the earth re-clad in the beautiful verdure of the spring season.
28. Starry night—the sky studded with bright stars, at night.
29. Autumn evening—the beauty of the autumnal sunset.
30. When the golden mists are born—enveloped in mist sparkling in the rosy light of dawn.
31. All the forms.....frost—the beautiful images that the action of the wind produces upon frost.
34. Everything almost which is Nature's—nearly all natural objects.
36. Untainted by man's misery—not associated with human suffering
37. Tranquil solitude—peaceful retired spots.
38. Society—human company.
39. There should be a semi-colon at the end of this line.
40. Between thee and me what difference?—you and I are exactly alike in our tastes
41. But thou dost.....less—the only difference between you and me is that whereas you possess the objects that are dear to you, I have to be in search of them, although in point of love for those objects I am in no way inferior to you.
43. Though he has wings—though love is very fickle. Cupid, the god of love, was for this reason represented in classical mythology as furnished with a pair of wings on his shoulders.
44. Like light can flee—can disappear quickly and imperceptibly.
45. Above all other things—more than anything else.
47. Thou art love and life—it is joy that makes both love and life enjoyable.

46 Make.....home,—make my heart again joyful.

· Explanation.

O Spirit of Joy ! your visits to me have become most infrequent. You have ceased to come to me for a long time. It is a long and weary time since you left me.

How can a wretched man like me be again a happy man, seeing that it is your practice to confer happiness on those who are already happy and free from cares ? Treacherous as you are, you bestow your favour on those who do not need them.

You seem to be as frightened with the sight of sorrow as a lizard is with the shadow of a trembling leaf. You will not visit a person who is afflicted with the mildest form of sorrow, and no reproach has any effect upon you.

I shall set my plaintive song to a joyful tune because you will not come out of pity, but only to participate in joy. And when you have once come, pity will bid you stay on.

I love the same things that you love, O Spirit of Joy ; for example, the earth re clad in the fresh verdure of the spring season, the sky studded with bright stars at night, the beauty of the autumnal sunset, the sunrise enveloped in the rosy mist of dawn.

I love snow and all the beautiful shapes that the action of wind produces upon frost. I love waves, winds and storms, in fact, nearly all natural objects which are not associated with human suffering

I love peaceful retired spots, and only such human company as is free from noisy riot, free from folly, and free from vice. You and I are then exactly alike, the only difference being that whereas you possess the objects that are dear to you, I am without them, although in point of love for those objects I am in no way inferior to you.

I am fond of love, though it is by nature fickle and can disappear quickly and imperceptibly. But the best thing I love

is joy ; it is joy that makes both love and life enjoyable.  
Come, Spirit of Delight, and make my heart again joyful.

---

227.

# STANZAS WRITTEN IN DEJECTION NEAR NAPLES.

(Page 227).

## Introduction.

This poem was composed in 1818. The following extract from a letter written by Shelley to Thomas Love Peacock (a brother poet) and dated, Naples, December 22, 1818, is quoted by Mr. Fowler in his edition of *Golden Treasury*, Book IV :—

“ We set off an hour after sunrise one radiant morning in a little boat ; there was not a cloud in the sky, nor a wave upon the seas, which was so translucent that you could see the hollow caverns clothed with the glaucous sea-moss, and the leaves and branches of those delicate weeds that pave the unequal bottom of the water. As we approached, the heat, and especially the light, became intense. We then coasted the bay of Baiae to the left, in which we saw many picturesque and interesting ruins ; but I have to remark that we never disembarked but we were disappointed—while from the boat the effect of the scenery was inexpressibly delightful. The colours of the water and the air breathe over all things here the radiance of their own beauty.”

## Notes

2. Dancing—moving up and down.

Fast—quickly.

3. Blue isles—*islands covered with vegetation and hence looking blue in the distance. The islands visible from Naples are the Lipari Isles.*

Snowy—*snow-clad. Wear—are bathed in.*

4. Purple noon—‘ Purple ’ is here a transferred epithet, properly applicable to ‘ light.’

Transparent—clear ; through which objects were visible to a great distance.

Light—A better reading is ' might ' in place of ' light,' because ' light ' occurs at the end of the next line.

5. The breath of the moist air is light—i.e., the air is moist, but not damp, only *lightly* charged with moisture. Another reading is "moist earth."

6. Unexpanded—not yet in blossom.

7. Like many a voice of one delight—like a number of pleasant sounds mingled together.

8. The winds'—the rustling of the wind.

The birds'—the song of birds,

The ocean-floods'—the murmur of the sea.

9. The City's voice itself—even the din of busy life.

Soft like solitude's—so faint as to be scarcely audible.

Explanation : Stanza 1.—The sun is shining brightly ; the sky is unclouded ; the sparkling waves of the sea are moving up and down quickly ; the green islands and the snow-clad hills appear bathed in the clear purple light of noon, looking blue owing to distance ; a soft humid breeze is blowing gently around the flowers which have not yet opened their blossoms. Even the din of busy life proceeding from the city, which is like a number of pleasant sounds mingled together (such as the rustling of the wind, the song of birds, the murmur of the sea), is as soothing as a peaceful retreat.

10. Deep—the sea.

Untrampled floor—untrodden bottom. See Introduction to this poem.

11. Strown—scattered.

13. Dissolved in star-showers—broken into innumerable minute particles of light.

14. The sands—the sea beach.

15. Lightning—i.e., bright sparkle.



16. Tone—*i.e.*, music.

17. Measured motion—rhythmical movement.

18 Did any heart.....emotion—if I could only enjoy this scene in the company of a beloved friend.

Explanation : Stanza 2.—I see the untrodden surface of the sea scattered over with green and purple seaweeds. The waves are dashing upon the coast and breaking in a mass of sparkling foam and spray that looks like innumerable minute particles of light. I sit all alone on the sea beach. The bright sparkle of the sea in the noonday sun is gleaming all round me, and the rhythmical movement of its waves is producing a pleasant murmur. How enjoyable indeed would this scene be if some one were by me to participate in my joy !

20. Peace within—mental tranquillity.

Calm around—peaceful surroundings.

21. Content—contentment

Surpassing wealth—which is more valuable than riches

22 Sage—ancient philosophers.

Meditation—contemplation ; communion with their own thoughts

23 Walked—*i.e.*, lived.

With inward glory crowned—enjoying spiritual bliss by reason of which he was like a king

24 Nor fame, &c.—nor *have* I fame, &c.

25. Whom these surround—who are in possession of these.

26. Smiling they live—such men lead a happy life.

Call life pleasure—regard life as a blessing.

27. That cup—*i.e.*, life.

Has been dealt in another measure—*i.e.*, my lot in life has been just the reverse.

**Explanation : Stanza 3**—Alas ! I am in the enjoyment of neither hope nor health, neither mental tranquillity nor peaceful surroundings. Nor do I even possess that contentment which is more valuable than riches, and which ancient philosophers derived from communion with their own mind, and by virtue of which they lived a life of perfect happiness. Nor yet do I enjoy fame, nor power, nor love, nor leisure. There are other men who being in possession of these lead a happy life, and regard life as a blessing : my experience of life has however been just the contrary.

28 Now—just at this moment.

Is mild—*i. e.*, has lost some of its horror.

29. Even as the winds and waters are—just as the wind has become gentler and the sea smoother.

31. Weep away the life of care—forget all my cares by weeping.

32. Have borne—*sc*, in the past

Must bear—*sc.*, in the future.

33. Like sleep.....me—might come over me gently and peacefully.

34. In the warm air—He is alluding to what he has said in the very first line of this poem—‘the sun is warm’

35. My cheeks grow cold—*i e*, death coming over me.

36. Breathe o’er my dying brain.....monotony—making a last murmur in my ears as I lie dying.

**Explanation : Stanza 4.**—But at this moment even despair has lost some of its horror in the presence of the gentle breeze blowing now, and the smooth sea dancing before me. I feel inclined to lie down on the beach and, like a child, banish all my past and future cares in a flood of tears. And then I might obtain relief that will make death a peaceful end for me as I shall give up my breath in the warm air, with the monotonous music of the waves ringing in my ears for the last time.

240.

## TO THE SKYLARK.

(Page 242)

## Introduction.

This poem was composed in 1825 and first published two years later. The skylark, like the nightingale, has inspired many poets—Wordsworth, Shelley, Hogg, Keats, and others. The peculiarity of this bird is that it soars to a great height vertically over its nest, warbling all the time. Its song is heard at sunrise.

Wordsworth himself says of this piece—"written at Rydal Mount, where there are no skylarks, but the Poet is everywhere"

The following criticism on this poem is worth notice:—"Wordsworth's song never soars so far as to be oblivious of the earth and the common life of men. Like his own skylark he is true to the kindred points of Heaven and Home, rising to a splendid height at times, but always to bring some lesson down. In every aspect of Nature, in every bird and flower, he finds 'thoughts that lie deep'; and everywhere he hears 'the still sad music of humanity.'"

## Notes

1. Ethereal—heavenly. 'Ether' is the name of the fluid that fills the space beyond the limits of the atmosphere.

Minstrel—an itinerant singer and musician who sang songs relating to old times to the accompaniment of the harp.

Pilgrim of the sky—bird that soars up on high as though bound on a pilgrimage to the sky.

*N B*—There is a similarity of idea in the two phrases applied to the skylark. A *minstrel* is one who wanders far to sing songs; a *pilgrim*, one who travels far to worship at a shrine. *Ethereal* means 'belonging to the sky,' because *ether* is the substance supposed to pervade the regions of the sky.

2. Despise the earth—scorn to come down on the ground. The poet asks this, because the skylark loves to soar in the sky, and thus as it were hates to live on earth.

Where cares abound—because it is a place full of  
cares

3. Aspire—mount up.

Heart—i. e., thy thoughts and feelings.

Eyes—i. e., thy gaze.

4 With thy nest—fixed on thy nest which is built on the ground. The skylark builds its nest on the ground, not on the branches of trees as most other birds do.

Dewy ground—The ground is called 'dewy' because the lark sings at sunrise before the morning dew has dried up.

5. Which thou.....will—into which thou canst descend whenever thou pleasest. The lark soars in a direct line above its nest.

6. Those quivering wings.....still—your trembling wings having ceased to move, your songs having stopped.

*N. B.*—'Wings' and 'music' are both nominative absolute

Explanation : Stanza 1.—O Skylark, you are a heavenly singer, a pilgrim travelling through the sky. Do you hate to come down to the earth because it is a place full of sorrow? Or is it that while you are soaring high up in the sky your thoughts and gaze are both concentrated on the earth, where your nest is? You keep soaring in a direct line above your nest, so that you can drop down into it whenever you please, as soon as your wings have ceased to flutter, and your songs are hushed.

7. To the last point of vision—as far up as eye can see.

And beyond—and even further up than that.

8. Mount—soar. Imperative mood.

Daring warbler—bold singer.

Love-prompted strain—a song inspired by love.

9. Twixt thee and thine.....bond—which serves as an indissoluble bond of union between you and your mate.

10. Thrills not the less—causes the same ecstasy.  
 Bosom of the plain—i.e., among men on earth.

11. Proud privilege—an exemption of which you may well be proud. This “proud privilege” is ‘to sing all independent of the leafy spring.’

12. All independent of—regardless of the presence or absence of.

Leafy spring—the spring season marked by the re-appearance of leaves on trees.

Explanation: Stanza 2.—Go on ascending higher and higher as far as eye can see, and higher still, O bold singer. Your song, which is inspired by love and which serves as the closest bond of union between you and your mate, fills with ecstasy not only yourself but also men on earth. But yet you seem to be quite indifferent to the beauties of the spring season—an exemption of which you may well be proud.

13. Shady wood—close covert of trees.

14. Privacy of glorious light—a seclusion attained by your soaring high into the radiant heavens; a lofty solitude attained, not by hiding yourself in a dark bush (as the nightingale does), but by ascending high up into the open light of the sky, the very intensity of which serves as a screen for the bird, because it prevents our seeing the bird in the glare.

15. Pour upon the world—utter in the hearing of all men.

A flood of harmony—an outburst of sweet song.

16. More divine—more heavenly or sacred than that of the nightingale, because the lark sings its songs from near the gate of heaven

17. Soar—i.e., indulge in lofty thoughts and speculations.

Roam—i.e., stray from household interests.

18. True—faithful. Kindred points—allied concerns.

*N. B.*—The lark is spoken of here as a fit type of those wise great men who soar into high regions of thought, but never wander from the point that connects the high themes on which their minds dwell with the humble duties and interests of their home.

**Explanation : Stanza 3.**—Let the nightingale sing in a dark covert ; you prefer another kind of seclusion—a lofty solitude attained by soaring into the open light of the sky, whose intensity serves as a screen for you. From that lofty height you utter in the hearing of all men an outburst of sweet song, with a truer instinctive passion than that of the nightingale. You are a fit type of those wise great men who while they soar into high regions of thought and philosophy, take care not to cut themselves off from the lowly duties and humble interests of their home.

---

245.

## UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE.

(Page 250).

### Introduction

This sonnet was composed on July 31, 1802, and first published in 1807. On this day Wordsworth left London for Dover, on his way to Calais, and this sonnet was written as he travelled towards Dover. The journal of the poet's sister, Dorothy, has the following entry under this date :—

"Left London between five and six o'clock. A beautiful morning. The city, St Paul's with the river—a multitude of little boats, made a beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge, the houses not overhung by their clouds of smoke, and were hung out endlessly, yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a pure light, that there was something like the purity of one of Nature's own grand spectacles."

Says Prof. Fowler in his edition of Book IV of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury of Songs and Lyrics* :—

"To any one who has ever looked upon such a scene, this sonnet will bring it back with wonderful vividness, steeped in a glow of sunshine, like a painting of Turner. Yet it is noteworthy how vague the details are as compared with those of a picture ; the form and arrangement

of the 'ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples' are supplied by the reader's memory or imagination—not indicated by the poet."

This poem is what is known in poetry as a sonnet, a species of poetical composition consisting of fourteen lines, arranged in a certain order. It is of Italian origin, and consists of two stanzas of four lines each, called the *octave*, and two of three each, called the *sestette*. The *octave* of the proper sonnet consists of two quatrains, the rhymes of which are restricted to two—one for the first, fourth, fifth and eighth lines; the other for the second, third, sixth and seventh. In the *sestette*, which is commonly made up of two tercets, the rhymes may be two or three, variously distributed. In this sonnet, lines 1—3, and 5 rhyme with one another and the rest have another rhyme for themselves. This is the arrangement of the Petrarchan Sonnet. There is another kind—called the Shakespearian—in which the arrangement of the lines is different. The sonnet generally consists of one principal idea, pursued through the various antitheses of the different strophes. It suits particularly grave, dignified, and contemplative subjects.

#### Notes.

1. Earth has not.....fair—this is one of the most beautiful scenes one can ever see
2. Dull of soul—utterly incapable of appreciating beauty.  
Pass by—fail to notice.
3. Touching—impressive; moving the heart.  
Majesty—supreme beauty and splendour.
4. This City—London.  
Now—at this early hour of morning.  
Like a garment—i.e., with the effect of heightening its beauty and hiding its defects.

NOTE.—The simile suggests that just as a garment hides the ugly nakedness of a person and beautifies his appearance, in the same way the early morning light spread over the city, hiding its defects and heightening its beauty

5. Silent—because the busy activity of the day has not yet commenced

Bare—clear to the view ; not overhung by their clouds of smoke.

6. Domes—*sc.*, like that of St Paul's cathedral.

Temples—churches and cathedrals. Lie—*i.e.*, are visible.

7. Open unto the fields—visible as far as the tilled areas around the city.

To the sky—as far up as the blue sky above.

NOTE—"London, as he sees its outspread panorama in its early morning brightness and purity, seems to him at one with the silent beauty of the nature he loves. In its midday smoke and noise London is cut off from all community with the green fields around and the blue sky above" (Webb)

8. Smokeless—pure, because the mills and factories are not yet at work.

9. Steep—drown ; plunge.

10. His first splendour—the early morning light.

Valley, rock, or hill—*i.e.*, any country scene. The meaning is that even a country scene never looked so beautiful in the early morning light as this city scene now does.

NOTE.—Prof Herford (in his *Age of Wordsworth*) notes as one of the limitations of Wordsworth that his imagination was not greatly touched by cities.

11. A calm so deep—such a profoundly peaceful scene. This is the meaning when the phrase is taken with 'saw' ; with 'felt' it means 'such perfect tranquillity of mind.'

12. The river—the Thames. Westminster Bridge crosses the Thames in the neighbourhood of Westminster Abbey, the Houses of Parliament, and Whitehall.

Glideth—flows. At his own sweet will—"undisturbed by oar or paddle-wheel" (Webb). Because in the early morning there are no boats or steamers sailing over the river.



13. Dear God!—"an exclamation of mingled awe and wonder." (Webb),

The very houses seem asleep—there are no signs of activity anywhere in the city, so that even the buildings seem to be hushed in repose,

14. The mighty heart—that vast city.

Lying still—reposing in perfect calm.

NOTE.—"Observe how beautifully the quietness of the houses becomes a *sleep*, the attribute of a living creature; the transition being thus facilitated to the image of the city's mighty heart."

### Explanation.

This is the most beautiful scene one can ever see; and the man who fails to notice such an impressive and splendid spectacle is utterly incapable of appreciating any beauty at all. In the light of the morning the city's defects are hidden and its beauty heightened, in the same way as a garment serves to conceal the ugly nakedness of a person and beautify his appearance. Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and churches, in fact, the whole city, is clearly visible as far around as the surrounding fields and as far up as the blue sky overhead, because the atmosphere is at this hour perfectly free from smoke. Even a country scene never appeared so lovely in the early morning light. Never before did I see such a profoundly peaceful scene, never felt such perfect tranquillity of mind, as on the present occasion. The Thames flows on freely, with its current undisturbed by oar or paddle-wheel. There are absolutely no signs of life anywhere, and the whole of this vast, stupendous city, with its manifold occupations and activities, is reposing in perfect calm.

246.

## OZYMANDIAS OF EGYPT.

(Page 251).

## Introduction.

This sonnet was written in 1817, and is one of the best of Shelley's sonnets

The subject of the poem, Ozymandias, is supposed to have been a king of ancient Egypt, a king who reigned in the days of the Pyramids. Shelley here imagines an oriental traveller reporting to him the discovery of an enormous mutilated statue of this ancient king, with an inscription at the foot of it, which the poet here reproduces in English. But the fact is that very few scholars in Shelley's day could decipher Egyptian hieroglyphics, so the king, the statue, the inscription, everything in the sonnet is purely imaginary.

## Notes.

1. An antique land—an ancient country, viz., Egypt. f

2. Trunkless—without the main body.

4. Half sunk—partially imbedded in sand.

Shattered visage—a stone face broken in pieces.

5. Wrinkled—gathered into a look of proud contempt

Sneer of cold command—a look of scorn mingled with authority. Being carved in stone it is said to be 'cold.'

6. Tell—prove; show.

Its sculptor—the artist who carved this face in stone.

Well those passions read—had carefully studied the expression of those strong feelings which were depicted on this stone face.

7. Which yet survive—'Survive' is here a transitive verb, having for its object 'the hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.'

Stamped—depicted, engraved.

These lifeless things—viz., the stone face.

8. The hand that mocked them—viz., the sculptor's hand which represented those passions in stone. 'Mocked' here means 'imitated,' with probably the suggested sense 'with a view to ridiculing them.'

The heart that fed—the character of the man (Ozymandias of Egypt) who owned those passions.

9. Pedestal—a raised platform on which a statue stands.

These words appear—the following inscription is engraved.

10. King of Kings—a most powerful king.

11. Ye mighty—ye potentates of the earth.

Despair—i. e., despair of being ever able to equal my glory, or of the permanence of worldly things.

12. Nothing beside—no other relic. Decay—ruins.

13. Colossal wreck—enormous shattered statue.

Boundless—extensive, vast.

Bare—with no trees or houses standing on them.

*N B*—Both these adjectives ('boundless' and 'bare') qualify 'sands' in the next line.

14. Lone—lonely. Sands—sc., of the desert.

#### Explanation.

I met a traveller from the ancient country of Egypt, and he gave me the following report.—

Two stupendous legs of a stone statue, but without the main body, stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand, and partially buried in it, lies a stone face broken in pieces. The face wears a frowning look, with gathered lips, a look of scorn mingled with high authority. It shows that the artist who made this statue had carefully studied the expression of the strong feelings depicted on the stone face; for even after the lapse of so many ages, and even though the face is shattered, those feelings can plainly be traced in that face. The skill of the sculptor, and the character of the man whose statue it is, are both clearly visible in that

mutilated face. On the pedestal on which the statue stood, there is the following inscription:—‘My name is Ozymandias, a most powerful king. I have constructed such mighty works that the kings of the future will look upon them in despair of being ever able to equal my glory.’ No other part of the statue remains. On all sides of the remains of this enormous statue the vast, treeless, sandy desert stretches far away.

---

250

## THE REAPER.

(Page 255).

### Introduction.

This poem was first published in 1807, and describes a sight that the poet actually beheld during a tour through Scotland undertaken in the company of his sister and Coleridge in the autumn of 1803. In the Diary of the poet's sister there is the following entry under date September 13, 1803:—

“As we descended the scene became more fertile. It was harvest-time, and the fields were quietly—might I be allowed to say pensively?—enlivened by small companies of reapers. It is not uncommon in the more lonely parts of the Highlands to see a single person so employed.”

Wordsworth himself added the following note to this poem.—

“This poem was suggested by a beautiful sentence in a manuscript ‘Tour in Scotland,’ written by a friend, the last line being taken from it *verbatim*.”

The sentence referred to occurs in Wilkinson's *Tours to the British Mountains*: “Passed a female who was reaping alone: she sung in Euse, as she bended over her sickle, the sweetest human voice I ever heard. her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more.”

## Notes.

1. Single—alone. Field—corn-field.
2. Yon—yonder. Lass—girl.
3. Reaping—cutting the harvest. By herself—alone.
4. Stop here—pause here,—so as to hear the song.  
Gently pass—*sc.*, so as not to disturb her.
5. Binds—*sc.*, into sheaves.
6. Melancholy strain—plaintive song.
7. Vale profound—deep valley.
8. Overflowing—*i.e.*, resounding.

Explanation: Stanza 1.—Behold yonder Highland girl, alone in the cornfield, cutting the corn and singing all alone. Pause and listen, or else pass on without disturbing her. She is cutting the corn and gathering it into sheaves all alone. Listen to her song, for the deep valley is resounding with its music.

9. Chaunt—sing.
10. More welcome notes—a song more sweet or soothing.  
Weary bands—fatigued groups.
11. Shady haunt—cool oasis.
12. Sands—deserts.
13. Thrilling—producing ecstasy.
15. Breaking the silence of the seas—Prof Fowler remarks upon this line: “Those who have had the good fortune to sail among the Hebrides in calm weather will understand the beauty and truth of the expression ‘the silence of the seas.’”
16. Farthest Hebrides—a group of islands off the north-west coast of Scotland

Explanation: Stanza 2 —Even the song of the nightingale never appeared so sweet and soothing to weary groups of travellers through the Arabian deserts resting in some cool oasis. The song of the cuckoo heard in the spring season in the Hebridean seas off the north-west coast of Scotland, never appeared so rapturous as the song of this girl.

17. What she sings—the subject of her song. Wordsworth could not understand the Scottish dialect of the song.

18. Plaintive numbers—sad song.

Flow for—*i.e.*, relate to.

19. Unhappy—melancholy.

For-off things—distant events.

20. Long ago—of olden times.

21. More humble—less ambitious. Lay—song.

22. Familiar matter of to-day—event of everyday occurrence.

23. Natural sorrow—grief such as happens everyday.

24. Has been—*sc.*, in the past.

May be again—is likely to take place in the future.

Explanation : Stanza 3.—I am curious to know the subject of her song. Probably her song relates to some melancholy event of ancient times, or some battle fought long ago. Or probably the subject of the song is a less ambitious theme, some ordinary occurrence of recent days—such as a common matter of grief, or loss, or pain, such as has happened frequently before and will happen frequently in the future.

25 Theme—subject. Parse as nominative case to the verb 'may have been' understood.

27 At her work—as she did her work.

28. Sickle—scythe. Bending—stooping.

30. In my heart I bore—*i.e.*, the music was so sweet that I could not forget it.

Explanation : Stanza 4.—Whatever might have been the subject of her song, the girl sang so continuously that it seemed as if she would never stop. I saw her singing as she did her work of reaping while bending over the scythe with which she was cutting the corn. I listened quietly, and as I ascended the hill, the song still seemed to haunt my soul although it no longer reached my ears.

266.

## TO SLEEP.

(Page 275).

## Introduction.

This Sonnet is one of a group of three, all addressed to sleep. All three were written in 1806 and published in 1807.

A critic of Wordsworth says of this sonnet :—" This is one of Wordsworth's most admired sonnets, and it is, I think, worthy of all admiration. To say nothing of other excellencies, what I have called the flower-like unfolding of thought is here natural and easy : first the feverish unrest of a sleepless night—its weary length impressed upon us by a series of pictures, then the waiting for the dawn and the voices of the birds—by which the long weary hours of darkness and silence are still more vividly brought before us ; and then an appeal to sleep—so tender and pathetic that one can hardly believe it could have been refused."

## Notes

1. Leisurely—slowly.
  2. One after one—one at a time ; in single file.
  4. White sheets of water—a large lake.
  - 5 By turns—one after another.
  - 7 Orchard—a fruit garden.
  - 8 First—singing earliest in the morning.
- Melancholy cry—the cuckoo's note which Wordsworth elsewhere always describes as merry and joyful, is here described as a " melancholy cry"—a touch which well brings out the poet's misery at his insomnia.
9. Even thus—exactly in this fashion. Lay—lay in bed.
  10. By any stealth—by any means.
  11. Wear tonight away—pass this night too in sleeplessness.

12. Morning's wealth—the rich store of fresh and beautiful things that are visible in the morning.

13. Blessed—happy.

Barrier between day and day—that which separates one day from the next.

14. Dear mother of—*i.e.*, it is sleep that produces.

#### Explanation.

I have tried all manner of expedients for inducing sleep—such as fixing the mind upon the passage of a flock of sheep singly through a stile, the monotonous pitter-patter of rain-drops on the roof, the humming of bees, the moan of cataracts, the soft rustling of the wind, or the murmur of the sea; or dwelling upon vague indefinite spaces, such as level fields stretching far and wide, huge lakes, or the cloudless sky. But all these expedients have failed to bring on sleep; and thus I shall be sleepless until in a short time the morning will dawn and I shall hear the song of birds coming from my garden, including the sad note of the cockoo, the earliest of singers. For the last three nights successively I have had no sleep by any means. I pray thee, do not let me pass another night in this sleepless fashion. Come, gentle sleep, that separates one day from the next. It is thou that makest the beauty of the morning enjoyable; it is thou that producest fresh thoughts and causest good health.

---

269.

### THE INNER VISION,

(Page 278.)

#### Introduction.

This sonnet gives expression to Wordsworth's philosophy of poetry—that thought and love are essential to poetry. This means that intellectual power must be combined with an emotional temperament before the production of poetry is possible. External beauty of scenery, and the power of observation are both unessential. However beautiful the



scene may be, or however keen may be one's faculty of observation, it will not give birth to true poetry unless the poet's mind possesses a capacity of rich thought and rich feeling. With these in possession, a man can turn the most commonplace subject into the finest poetry.

#### Notes.

1. Sweet—enjoyable. Unuplifted eyes—looks directed downwards.

2. Pace the ground—walk on.

If path be there or none—so absorbed in one's own thoughts as not to care whether there is a road or not.

3. Fair region—beautiful tract of country

4. Forbears.....upon—on which he just casts one glance and no more.

5. Pleased rather with—because he is better occupied with dwelling on. Soft—pleasing

Ideal scene—mental picture; imaginary landscape.

6 Work of Fancy—brought up before his mind's eye by Imagination

Happy tone of meditation—a train of happy thoughts.

7. Slipping in between—striking his mind in the interval between

8. The beauty.....gone—the beautiful scene lying ahead and the one that he has left behind.

9. Thought—intellectual power.

Love—capacity for love. Desert—leave; forsake.

10. Break off all commerce—cut off all intercourse.

The muse—the goddess of poetry.

11. Companions of our way—i.e., to assist us.

12. Whatever.....refuse—i.e., irrespective of what outward scenes we may notice or fail to notice

13. Internal heaven—i.e., the mind's own capacity of

thought and love, which makes it a blissful scene, far exceeding any beautiful scene in nature.

Her dews—i.e., its refreshing power.

14. Humblest lay—most trivial subject of song.

Explanation.

Very pleasant indeed it is to walk on with upward gaze, not caring whether there is a path in front or not. In this state a man grows indifferent to outward scenery, his mind being rapt with some imaginary scene depicted before his mental vision, or some pleasing thought which engages his mind in the interval between his perception of a beautiful scene he has left behind and one that lies ahead. If a man should happen to lose his intellectual power and his capacity for love, he had better at once cease to write poetry. On the other hand, as long as he remains in possession of these, his mental faculties will supply him with the needful poetical inspiration which will turn the most trivial subject into a lofty theme, regardless whether there is any outward beauty to be perceived or not.

272.

WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING.

(Page 282)

Introduction.

This poem was both composed and published in 1798. Wordsworth himself tells us that these lines were written while he was sitting by the side of the brook that runs through the grounds of Alfoxden. He goes on to say:—

“The brook ran down a sloping rock, so as to make a waterfall, and across the pool below had fallen a tree from which rose perpendicularly boughs in search of the light intercepted by the deep shade above. The boughs bore leaves of green, that for want of sunshine had faded into almost lily-white, and from the under side of this natural sylvan bridge depended long and beautiful tresses of ivy which waved gently in the breeze.”

The holly grove in Alfoxden dell was a favourite resort of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and their friends. Coleridge has also described it in a poem.

### Notes.

1. A thousand—(used indefinitely for) a large number.

Blended notes—a softly mingling melody composed of the song of birds, the hum of insects, the rustling of leaves, &c.

2 A grove—the reference is to the holly grove in Alfoxden dell. See Introduction above.

Reclined—in an easy posture.

3. Sweet mood—happy frame of-mind.

Sad thoughts—melancholy reflections. These 'sad thoughts' are explained in lines 7, 8.

Explanation: Stanza 1.—As I was once sitting in a holly grove in Alfoxden dell, I heard a softly mingling melody composed of the song of birds and the humming of insects and the rustling of leaves. This put me in that happy frame of mind in which the joyful sentiments suggested by the sight of beautiful natural scenes, awaken some melancholy reflections as well.

5. Fair works—beautiful objects, such as birds, trees, and flowers. Link—bring into sympathy.

6 Through me ran—dwells within me

NOTE—Lines 5 and 6 literally mean 'Nature brought my human soul into sympathy with her beautiful objects,' i.e. I felt as if I shared the happy life of the birds and trees, and flowers I saw around me. These lines represent Wordsworth's attitude towards nature—his theory being that the works of nature are in a sense endowed with life and that they share in a universal soul which is common to them and humanity.

7. Much it grieved my heart—I felt exceedingly sorry.

8. What—what a miserable creature.

Explanation: Stanza 2.—While I beheld the beauty and exquisite order of Nature around me, I felt as if I shared the happy life of the birds, trees, and flowers I saw around me, and I realized with the greater vividness the

misery and disorder that man, by his cruelty to his fellowman, has introduced into the world.

NOTE.—The demands of civilization force man into a kind of artificial existence, wherein he must ignore the simple and healthier life and pleasure which are sufficient to render the birds and flowers perfectly happy

9. *Primrose*—a kind of small flower, so named because it is one of the earliest in the season. Lat. *primus*, 'first.'

Tufts—knots; clusters

Sweet bower—delightful grove.

10. *Periwinkle*—(From Lat *per*, thoroughly, and *vincire*, to bind) a plant with a rich blue flower and trailing stem covered with glossy green leaves.

Trailed its wreaths—dragged along its creepers.

11. *Faith*—firm belief. *Every flower*—all natural objects.

12. *Enjoys the air it breathes*—i.e. the objects of nature are not only endowed with life but also enjoy some measure of conscious happiness

NOTE.—Lines 11 and 12 contain Wordsworth's theory in a nutshell They are often quoted

Explanation : Stanza 3.—In that delightful grove I saw creepers of the periwinkle growing in and about clusters of the primrose. It is my firm belief that all natural objects are not only endowed with life but also enjoy some measure of conscious happiness.

13. *Hopped*—skipped.

14. *Measure*—gauge ; fathom.

16. *It*—an unnecessary repetition of the subject of the sentence, 'motion'

*Thrill*—a sudden strong feeling.

Explanation : Stanza 4.—The birds skipped and fitted about around me ; but though I cannot gauge their thoughts, the slightest movement they made was suggestive of the keen pleasure enjoyed by them.

17. *Budding twigs*—slender branches just coming out.

*Fan*—fan-like shapes ; widening leaves.

18. Breezy—gentle ; soft.

19. Must think—cannot help believing.

Do all I can—in a way I cannot help ; *i.e.*, though sometimes science, and perhaps also the ordinary commonsense of men, would tell me that these objects have no feeling.

20. The first *there* is an introductory adverb, the second an adverb of place.

Explanation : Stanza 3.—The twigs expanded from the branches in the form of a fan, so as to secure the greatest amount of air ; and I could not help believing, in spite of anything to the contrary, that they too similarly enjoyed pleasure.

21 This belief—*viz.*, that natural objects enjoy pleasure same as man.

From heaven be sent—is implanted in me by God ; *i.e.*, is true.

22. Such—*viz.*, that happiness should prevail.

Holy plan—sacred dispensation.

23. Have I not reason to lament—I have certainly good grounds to mourn.

24. What man has made of man—the misery and unhappiness that man has introduced into the world by inflicting cruelty on his fellow-men.

Explanation : Stanza 6.—If this belief of mine—that natural objects are capable of enjoying pleasure same as man—be true ; if it is really the rule of nature that happiness should prevail ; I have certainly good grounds to mourn the misery and unhappiness that man has introduced into the world by inflicting cruelty on his fellow-men.

---

## THE HUMAN SEASONS.

Page 307.

Introduction.

This Sonnet was written in 1818, and is, like the sonnet

' On looking into Chapman's *Homer*, ' highly Shakespearean both in tone and in sentiment. It represents human life as divided into four periods, corresponding to the four seasons into which a year is divided. There is a striking resemblance between the thoughts of this sonnet and those of a famous passage in Shakespeare's *As you Like It*, Act II. sc., vii, dealing with the ' Seven Ages of Man,' which is quoted below for comparison :—

“ All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players ;  
They have their exits and their entrances ;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in his nurse's arms,  
And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,  
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,  
Jealous in honour. sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon's mouth And then the Justice,  
In fair round belly with good capon lined,  
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances :  
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,  
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide  
For his shrank shank ; and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion ;  
Sans teeth, sans eyes sans taste, sans everyth'ng.

## Notes.

1. Fill the measure of—*i.e.*, make up.
2. Mind of man—the intellectual life of man.
3. Lusty—vigorous. Spring—youth.  
Fancy clear—the imagination which is yet free from all worldly taint,

4. Takes in—receives impressions.  
With an easy span—without any effort on its part.

5. Summer—manhood.  
Luxuriously—in the greatest enjoyment.

6. Spring's honeyed cud.....ruminates—he is fond of dwelling upon the sweet thoughts and fancies he used to indulge in as a young man.

*N B*—‘To ruminate’ means ‘to chew the cud’ as some animals do. In ripe manhood, a man is fond of brooding over the joyous thoughts and fancies that he indulged in as a young man, in the same way as after swallowing a quantity of food in the morning, some animals (such as cows) chew the cud at noon

7. Dreaming high—lofty thoughts.
8. Is nearest unto heaven—imparts a religious tone to his life.

Quiet coves—retired nooks, *i.e.*, peace and tranquillity.

9. Autumn—old age. Wings—*i.e.*, imagination.

10. Furleth—*i.e.*, gathers up, ceases to exercise.

So—in this attitude ; with his wings furled.

11. Mists—*i.e.*, cheerless scenes—as opposed to the bright visions of his youth,

In idleness—in inactivity.

Fair things—objects of beauty.

12. Pass by unheeded—go unnoticed.

As a threshold brook—like a brook flowing past one's doors—which, by reason of familiarity, has lost all its beauty and interest.

13. Winter—*i.e.*, death.

Pale misfeature—cadaverous ugliness.

*N.B.*—‘Misfeature’ is a word that seems to have been coined by Keats.

14. Or else—if he were not subject to death.

Forego his mortal nature—be reckoned as a god.

### Explanation.

Just as the year is divided into four seasons—spring, summer, autumn, and winter, in the same way man’s intellectual life may also be divided into four corresponding periods, as follows :—(1) *vigorous youth* (corresponding to Spring), when his mind is so impressionable that it receives impressions of beauty from all sources, without any effort on its part ; (2) *manhood* (corresponding to Summer), when, in the enjoyment of homely comfort and competence, his favourite occupation is to dwell on his youthful thoughts and fancies, and to derive the highest happiness from it ; (3) *old age* (corresponding to Autumn), when his mind enjoys peace and tranquillity, when his power of imagination is at rest, when he satisfies his life of inactivity with looking on cheerless scenes that are in sad contrast to the bright visions of his youth, and when he grows absolutely indifferent to objects of beauty because of their very familiarity ; (4) *death* (corresponding to Winter), characterised by cadaverous ugliness of features, an event which is inevitable, for, otherwise man would be reckoned as a god.

187.

## ODE ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD.

Page 308.

### Introduction.

This poem, the best of Wordsworth’s poems and one of the best, if not *the* best, in the whole of English literature,



was composed between 1803 and 1806, and first published in 1807.

The central idea of the poem is the Hindu doctrine of pre-existence, which was first made known to the western world by a Greek philosopher named Pythagoras, who confessedly borrowed it from the Hindus. Plato afterwards developed the idea in a slightly modified form.

The leading thoughts of this Ode may be summarised as follows :—

The child's soul has had a previous existence before it took birth in the world. It existed in a better world which is connected, by the immanence of a supreme pervading Spirit, with the material world in which we live. The child begins by feeling this material world strange to him. But he sees in it resemblances with the spiritual world, to which he formerly belonged, and which he dimly remembers. He sees on Earth a beauty, a glory at once brighter and more unreal than it will appear to his eyes when he grows older and has become acclimatised to its new dwelling-place. And even when this freshness of insight has passed away, it occasionally happens that sights or sounds of unusual beauty will renew for a while this sense of vision and nearness to the spiritual world,—a sense which never loses its reality, though with advancing years its presence grows briefer and more rare.

With regard to the doctrine of pre-existence set forth in this Ode, Wordsworth himself remarks :—

“ To that dream-like vividness and splendour which invests objects of sight in childhood, every one, I believe, if he would look back, could bear testimony. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of man presents an analogy in its favour. Accordingly, a pre-existent state has entered into the popular creeds of many nations ; and is an ingredient in Platonic philosophy.”

The metre of this Poem is very irregular ; there is frequent change in the length of lines and in the arrangement of rhymes. But Wordsworth probably felt that the change of subject demanded change of metre and rhythm. The movement of the verse is intended to vary with the varying emotion ; hence the abrupt transitions both in the verse and in the ideas, transitions which are made with the greatest skill and delicacy.

The great value of the Poem lies, not in the truth of the doctrine that it preaches—the assertion of a deeper insight into external Nature enjoyed in childhood and lost in maturer years, but “ in its imaginative beauty, in the glamour of poetry that is cast upon human life, and the life of nature ; and in the poet’s power to convince us by the intensity of his own emotional realization of the truth, that this glamour of poetry is not a mere illusion but represents a spiritual meaning that has a real existence behind material phenomena.”

#### Notes

1. There was a time when—i.e., when I was a child.  
Meadow—pastures.

Grove—shady clusters of trees. Stream—rivers.

2. Common sight—ordinary natural object.

4. Apparellled in celestial light—clothed with a heavenly radiance.

5. Glory—splendour.

Freshness of a dream—i.e., vividness combined with a sense of their unreality.

6. Of yore—formerly ; in my childhood.

7. Turn wheresoe’er I may—in whatever direction I may look.

Explanation : Stanza 1.—In my childhood the whole of external nature—such as pastures, groves, rivers, the earth, in fact, every ordinary object—appeared to me as

though they were clothed with a heavenly radiance, with a strange splendour and vividness, combined however with a sense of their unreality. But this is not so now: I can no longer see that glory in any object, in whatever direction I may look, either by day or by night.

10. Comes and goes—appears in the sky and after a short time disappears again

12. With delight—joyfully. Look round her—shine.

13. Heavens—sky. Bare—cloudless.

16. Glorious birth—splendid creature.

*N B*—The word 'birth' in connection with 'sunshine' shows that the poet is referring to the beauty of the sunrise, and personifying it

18. A glory—a mystic splendour such as I saw in my childhood.

**Explanation: Stanza 2.**—External nature is still beautiful; for example, the rainbow, which appears in the sky for a short time and then disappears; the rose; the moon shining in a cloudless sky; an expanse of water on a starlit night; the sunrise; all these things are exceedingly beautiful. But yet I notice a change; the mystic splendour which I saw in those objects has vanished from everything.

20 Bound—frisk about.

21 As to the tabor's sound—as if they were dancing to the music of a little drum.

22. A thought of grief—a painful recollection—of the glory that has passed away.

23 Timely utterance—giving vent to that grief as soon as it was felt—without allowing it to settle into a deep melancholy. This "timely utterance" was in Stanzas 1 & 2.

Gave that thought relief—somewhat soothed that pain.

24 And I again am strong—and the result of it is that I feel my spirits revived.

25. Cataracts—waterfalls. Prof. Hales tells us that Wordsworth must have been thinking of the waterfalls of his favourite Lake country.

Blow their trumpets—*i.e.*, make a roaring sound.

Steep—high hills.

26 Grief of mine—my private grief—a grief felt by me alone.

The season wrong—do injustice to the universal happiness of the spring season.

27. Echoes—reverberations of natural sounds—such as the roar of cataracts, the song of birds, the cries of beasts, &c.

Throng—coming in quick succession.

28. Come to me—blow upon me.

The fields of sleep—the fields that were lying at rest during the night.

29. Gay—merry.

31. Give themselves up to jollity—are plunged in merry-making.

32. With the heart of May—with the exciting pleasures of the spring season.

33 Keep holiday—make merry.

34. Of joy—happy.

Explanation : Stanza 3.—Now that the spring season has set in, the birds are singing gaily and the lambs are frisking about as though they were dancing to the sound of the drum. Every one seems to be happy, except myself, who feel a painful recollection of the glory that has passed away from the earth. But I gave vent to that grief as soon as it was felt, and that somewhat soothed my pain, so that my spirits have revived. The waterfalls make a roaring sound in descending from the high hills—their roar being as it were due to mirth; the mountains resound with the voices of nature; the fresh morning breeze blows upon me from the

fields after their night's rest. The whole earth is merry. Both land and sea are plunged in merrymaking. Even the animals are making merry in the excitement caused by the happy spring season. Thou happy shepherd-boy, thou mayest shout as thou likest, without being afraid of me; indeed, I shall be glad to hear thy shouts.

36 Blessed creatures—happy beings.

Call—summons—the invitation to make merry.

38. Laugh with you—*i.e.*, join you; make merry in your company.

Jubilee—a season of rejoicing.

39. My heart is—*i.e.*, I fully sympathise with.

Festival—festivity; rejoicing at the approach of spring.

40. Coronal—a wreath worn by guests at Greek and Roman banquets.

My head hath its coronal—*i.e.*, I too am sharing in your festivity.

41. Fullness of your bliss—your transports of joy

I feel.....I feel it all—*i.e.*, I cannot be insensible to.

42. Evil day—misfortune. This is a mild oath..

Sullen—gloomy; melancholy.

43. Earth herself—the whole world.

Adorning—decorating itself.

44. May-morning—spring morning.

45. Culling—gathering.

49. And the babe.....arm—and even the little baby feels the excitement of the joyous season, and refuses to rest on its mother's arm.

51. Of many one—one particular tree. This tree was one associated with the poet's childhood.

53 Speak of something that is gone—reminded me of a vanished glory.

54. Pansy—heart's-ease, the flower of thought or remembrance.

55. Doth the same tale repeat—also reminds me of a vanished glory.

56. Visionary gleam—dreamlike splendour.

57 The glory and the dream—See l. 5, and note.

Explanation: Stanza 4.—O ye happy beings, I have heard your summons to each other to make yourselves merry. I have noticed that even the sky is joining you in your rejoicing. I fully sympathise with you in your festivity: I am a sharer in your merry-making; for I cannot be insensible to your deep joy. It would be a misfortune if I looked gloomy while the whole world was decorating itself for this spring-tide festival; while the children were gathering fresh flowers in valleys far and wide; while the sun was shining warm; and even the infant cannot help feeling the influence of the joyous season. Well; I do feel the happy excitement of the season. But there is a particular tree and a particular field associated with my childhood, both of which remind me of a vanished glory. The pansy growing underfoot reminds me of the same past splendour. Where, I ask, has fled away the dreamlike splendour, the fresh vividness that used to clothe those objects before?

58. In this and the following lines Wordsworth gives an explanation of this feeling of pain he feels at the disappearance of the glory from objects.

59. Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting—we were born into the world from a previous state of existence which was then forgotten or only dimly remembered.

59. Rises with us—takes birth in our body.

60. Elsewhere—in another world.

NOTE.—Our soul is here compared to a star. Just as a star sinks below the horizon of one hemisphere before it can appear above the horizon of another hemisphere, in the same way our soul finished a course of existence in a previous life before it took birth in the present world.

61. From afar—from a distant world, *viz.*, Heaven.
62. Not in entire forgetfulness—retaining some recollections, however indistinct, of its past life.
63. Not in utter nakedness—bearing some traces, however faint, of its past life *spiritual existence*
64. Trailing clouds of glory do we come—accompanied by bright indications of our glorious past life. Just as the sun, at rising, is often attended in its path by rosy clouds hanging on the eastern horizon, in the same way our soul, at birth, is accompanied by happy indications of its glorious past life.
65. God who is our home—heaven, which is the soul's permanent dwelling-place,—the earth being only a place of sojourn.
66. Heaven lies about us in our infancy—in our early childhood we perceive the glory of Heaven in everything that surrounds us.
67. Shades of the prison-house—the cares and worries of the world. The world is called a prison-house, because here the soul dwells in a state of bondage to sense and circumstance.

Close upon—gather thick around

68. The growing Boy—the child as he grows into a boy. As the child grows, the glory it perceived all round him fades more and more.
69. But he beholds the light—but still he does not lose sight of the glory altogether.
- And whence it flows—*sc.*, he still has glimpses of Heaven, the source of that light.
- 70 He sees it in his joy—he sees it and feels happy.
71. The youth—*i.e.*, when the boy grows up to be a young man.

Who daily from the east must travel—although every day of his life he feels the original glory—becoming more and more distant.

72. Still is Nature's priest—is even in youth a devout worshipper of Nature—an ardent lover of the beauty of natural objects.

73. Vision splendid—perception of heavenly glory.

74. Is on his way attended—is accompanied in his course through life

75. The man—i.e., when the youth grows up to full manhood.

Perceives it die away—loses sight of the glory altogether.

76. Fade into—the heavenly glory is entirely merged into.

Explanation: Stanza 5.—We are born into the world from a previous state of existence, which is then forgotten or only dimly remembered. Just as a star sinks below the horizon of one hemisphere before it can shine above the horizon of another, in the same way the human soul completes a course of existence in one life before it takes birth in the present world. The soul comes into this world from a distant sphere. But it retains some recollections, however indistinct, and bears some traces, however faint, of its glorious past. It is accompanied, at its birth, by bright indications of this glorious past, in the same way as the sun, at rising, is often attended in its path by rosy clouds hanging on the eastern horizon. These bright indications are of Heaven, which is the soul's permanent dwelling-place, the earth being only a place of sojourn. In our early childhood we perceive the glory of Heaven in everything that surrounds us; as we grow in years the cares and worries of life begin to surround us and darken this glory. But still the boy does not lose sight of the splendour altogether: he can still catch glimpses of Heaven, and feel happy. When the boy grows up to be a young man, he feels the original glory becoming more and



more distant every day of his life; but still he is a devout worshipper of Nature—an ardent lover of the beauty of natural objects, and has occasional perceptions of heavenly glory during his progress through life. At last, when the youth grows up to full manhood, he altogether loses sight of the heavenly glory which is merged in the ordinary daylight,—he becomes totally materialistic in his views.

77. Earth fills her lap,.....own—the world is full of worldly joys.

*N B.*—The word 'lap' is used in connection with 'Earth,' because the latter is represented as the foster-mother of man, throughout this stanza

78. Yearnings—a strong natural affection (for Man, her foster-child).

In her own natural kind—such as befits her nature; i.e., a love such as befits a foster-mother.

79 Something of a mother's mind—something of true maternal affection.

80. No unworthy aim—quite a laudable object. "Because being born into this world, it is right that we should take an interest in its pleasures and pursuits. We are not meant to be ascetics" (*Webb*)

81. Homely nurse—the plain conventional foster-mother, the Earth

*N B*—The foster-mother is 'homely' as compared with the real mother, Heaven, which is 'glorious.'

82 Her foster-child—man, the child entrusted to her care.

Her inmate—the being who has to live on Earth.

83. The glories he hath known—the glorious life he led in heaven.

84. That imperial palace—that magnificent mansion (*viz*, Heaven)

Explanation: Stanza 6.—The world offers a multiplicity of worldly joys for the happiness of man. The world

also bears to him a strong natural affection such as befits a foster-mother, and one may even say that she feels for him something of true motherly love. And this is quite a laudable object, because being born into the world it is only meet and proper that man should take an interest in its pleasures and pursuits. The affairs of the world are soon found so engrossing that man comes to forget the glorious life he led before, and that magnificent abode from which he came (*viz.*, Heaven).

85. Behold the Child—The child that Wordsworth had in mind in writing this stanza was Hartley Coleridge, son of his friend the poet Coleridge, 'Wordsworth has also addressed a Sonnet to this child, *To H. C., six years old.*

New-born blisses—earthly pleasures which he tastes for the first time.

86. Darling—dear creature. 'Darling' is the diminutive form of 'dear.'

Of a pigmy size—small in stature.

87. Work of his own hand—playthings that he has himself made.

88. Fretted—vexed because he is disturbed in his play.

Sallies—outbursts.

89. Light upon him.....eyes—with his father's beaming looks of affection fixed on him

90. Little plan or chart—childish representation of actual events.

91. Fragment—broken sketch.

Dream of human life—human life as the child imagines it to be.

95. Hath now his heart—engrosses his attention for the time being.

96. Unto this he frames his song—he makes it the subject of his merry childish prattle.

97. Then—the next moment. Fit—apply.

98. Dialogues of business, love or strife—imaginary conversations relating to business or friendship or enmity.

100. Thrown aside—abandoned.

102. The little actor—the child—called here an actor because in the course of his play he represents himself in various characters.

Cons another part—assumes a different role.

103. His “humorous stage”—the stage on which he represents the various moods and temperaments of mankind.

*Note*—The phrase “humorous stage” is quoted from the *Musophilus* of S. Daniel, and is hence put within quotation marks.

The word ‘humour’ is used in its Elizabethan sense of ‘a peculiar mood or disposition.’

104. Persons—various characters in which men figure in the world; “dramatis personæ.”

Palsied age—the paralytic old man.

105. That life.....equipage—which are to be met with in the world

106. Vocation—occupation; business in life.

107. Endless imitation—nothing but copying the actions of his elders.

**Explanation : Stanza 7.**—See yonder boy, lying among his new objects of pleasure. He is only a boy of six, very small in stature, and is lying in the midst of playthings constructed by himself. As he is engaged in play, his mother frequently irritates him by her outbursts of kisses, and his father’s beaming looks of affection rest on him. Near his feet are lying his dolls or toys which he has arranged in such a way, as to represent some aspect of human life as the child imagines it, such as a marriage ceremony or a festival, or a funeral procession. This engages his whole attention at the time, and he makes it the subject of his merry childish prattle. The next moment he will hold imaginary conversations relating to business, love or quarrel. But the very next moment again he will abandon this, and assume

a different role with the same zest and self-importance. He will represent himself in all the various characters in which he has seen men figuring in the world, and in all stages of life down to paralytic old age. In fact it will appear as if the child had no other pursuit than copying the actions of his elders.

108. Exterior semblance—outward appearance.

Doth belie—is the very opposite of.

Whose exterior semblance.....immensity—i.e., in outward appearance the child is a puny creature, weak and helpless, but in reality his soul is of infinite capacity.

110. Best philosopher—The child is so called because he is in possession of what the poet regards as true wisdom, and because he does not attach any value to worldly prizes.

Yet—upto this time. Because the child will lose this quality when he grows up.

Keep—retain.

111.—Thy heritage—thy ancient inheritance—viz., traces of Heaven.

Thou eye among the blind—the child alone perceives things in their true light: grown-up men see things in a false worldly light.

*N B*—Compare the Greek (and the Hindustani) proverb, "In the city of the blind the one eyed man is king"

112. Deaf and silent—though devoid of the power of hearing and speech; i. e., though deaf to worldly calls, and though unable to talk the language of the world.

Reads't the eternal deep—dost correctly understand the everlasting mystery of the universe.

113. Haunted for ever by the eternal Mind—pervaded everywhere and every moment by the divine Intelligence.

114. Mighty prophet—The child is called a great prophet, because he unconsciously reveals the truth.

Seer blest—prophet gifted with divine foresight.

115. On whom those truths do rest—who easily perceives those great secrets of life and death.

116 Which we are.....find--which men seek in vain through life to understand.

117. In darkness lost—unable to find a solution through our ignorance.

The darkness of the grave—i.e., ignorance due to our mortality.

118. Over whom thy Immortality.....slave—"the sense of his previous state of immortal existence embraces and encompasses the child (as light does an object) with a dominant and overpowering influence." (*Webb*).

*N B*—"A master o'er a slave"—This simile is intended to convey the idea of absolute subjection,—the slave in ancient institutions having been the absolute property of his owner

120 A presence.....by—i.e., the child cannot get rid of this sense of his past immortal existence. It is like an Angel present before him at all times.

121. Might—strength.

122. Heaven-born freedom—the child's sense of superiority to the world, due to its being a native of Heaven.

On thy being's height—resting on thy lofty existence.

*N B*.—Just as the rays of the sunken sun rest on the mountain top even after they have disappeared from the plain regions, in the same way the sense of "heaven-born freedom" rests on the child's soul, though it has worn off from the hearts of grown-up men. According to Wordsworth, childhood is the highest and noblest period of life

123 Earnest pains—hard labour; viz., his exertions in his play, his imitation of life.

Dost thou provoke.....yoke—i.e., why do you try to submit yourself to the bondage of worldly pursuits before your time, for as you grow you are sure to fall into that bondage?

125. Blindly—not knowing what thou art doing.

Blessedness—happy state.

At strife—fighting against. That is,—Why are you trying to destroy your happiness before its time? The moment you will enter the world, your unalloyed happiness will be gone, therefore the longer you can keep yourself aloof from worldly concerns, the better it is for your happiness.

126 Full soon—quickly enough; ere long.

Earthly freight—load of worldly cares.

127. Custom—social conventionalism; fashion and ceremony.

Lie upon thee with a weight—prove a galling burden to you; oppress thee like a load.

128. Heavy as frost—i.e., forming a thick crust upon your pure soul, and hardening it at the same time. Frost forms a crust over the soil, and has the effect of hardening the soil too.

Deep almost as life—suffusing your whole being.

Explanation: Stanza 8—O little child! In outward appearance you are a puny creature, weak and helpless, but in reality your soul is of infinite capacity. You are the best philosopher, because you do not attach any value to worldly prizes. You still retain possession of your ancient inheritance of Heaven; you alone perceive things in their true light, and though unconscious of your innate powers and giving no sign of their possession, you correctly understand the significance of the everlasting mystery of the universe pervaded everywhere and every moment by the divine Intelligence. You are a great prophet, a prophet blessed with divine foresight, who clearly perceives those great mysteries of life and death which men seek in vain through life to understand, and of which they are unable to find a solution through their ignorance, their utter ignorance. The sense of your previous state of immortal existence embraces and encompasses you with a dominant and overpowering influence in such a way that you cannot shake off this feeling. Though you are a tiny creature, yet you are a glorious

being, because the sense of superiority to the world (due to your being a native of Heaven) rests on your noble life like the sun's departing rays on the summit of a hill. Why should you be so anxious to submit yourself so early to the bondage of worldly pursuits into which you are sure to fall as you grow older? Why are you trying so thoughtlessly to destroy your happiness before its time? Soon enough will your soul feel the load of worldly cares, and the conventionalities of life prove a galling burden to you, forming a thick crust upon your pure soul and hardening it at the same time and suffusing your whole being.

129. In our embers—even when we have been turned to ashes.

130. Something that doth live—a spark of immortality, *viz.* our imperishable soul.

131. Nature—*i. e.*, the external world.

Remembers—*i. e.*, retains traces of.

132. What was so fugitive—the heavenly glory which was so transient.

133. Thought of our past years—recollections of our happy childhood.

Breed—produce; beget.

134. Benediction—*i. e.*, a feeling of thankfulness to God.

*N B.*—‘Benediction’ is here used in the sense the poet himself indicates in line 140—‘a song of thanks and praise.’

135. For that—for those characteristics of childhood.

Most worthy—very deserving.

To be blest—to thankful for.

136. Delight and liberty—joy and freedom.

*N B.*—‘Delight,’ ‘liberty,’ ‘the simple creed &c.’ are case in apposition with ‘that which is most worthy to be blest’

Simple creed—easy credulity; unsophisticated faith.

137. Busy or at rest—engaged in play or not.

138. New-fledged—fresh.

Fluttering—Hope is compared to a young bird—hence the word 'fluttering.'

139. 140. Raise the song of thanks and praise—feel thankful to God.

141. Obstinate questionings—persistent doubts.

142. Of sense and outward things—as to the reality of the external world. Wordsworth relates that he often fell into such an ecstasy of contemplation of the spiritual in nature, that he was forced to grasp a tree or some such solid object in order to bring himself back to a sense of his worldly existence.

143. Fallings from us—the feeling that external objects fall away from us, elude our grasp.

✓ Vanishings—the feeling that outward things mysteriously disappear from our presence

NOTE—*Fallings from us, vanishings*—Prof Hales explains this to mean "fits of utter dreaminess and abstraction, when nothing material seems solid, but every thing mere mist and shadow"

144. Blank misgivings—vague doubts

Of a creature—*viz.*, the child itself

145. Moving about.....realized—inhabiting a world which it has not yet quite understood.

146. High instincts—lofty sentiments; divine feelings.

Our mortal nature—the earthly part of us.

147. Did tremble.....surprised—i.e., shrank into nothingness.

148. But for—but I feel thankful for.

Those first affections—that earliest love.

149. Shadowy recollections—dim memories of our former life in heaven

150. Be they what they may—whatever their nature or origin may be.

151. Fountain-light of all our day—the prime source of all our true happiness.



152. Master-light of all our seeing—the cardinal principle of all our knowledge

153. Uphold us—support us in our hours of trial.

Cherish—*i.e.*, make life enjoyable.

154. Our noisy years—our life with its turmoil and activity.

Seem moments—appear very brief.

In the being—compared with the duration.

155. The eternal Silence—that eternity during which our life was free from noise and bustle.

Truths—connected with 'Not for these I raise the song of thanks and praise, but for truths &c.'

Wake—dawn upon the mind.

156. To perish never—and are of everlasting significance.

157. Listlessness—indifference ; apathy.

Mad endeavour—restless activity.

158. Nor man nor boy—neither years of manhood nor years of boyhood ; *i.e.*, lapse of time.

159. All that is at enmity with joy—*i.e.*, pain in any form.

160. Utterly abolish—totally efface ; entirely do away with.

161. Calm weather—*i.e.*, peace and tranquillity.

162. Inland far—remote from the shores of heaven, *i.e.*, plunged deep in worldliness.

163. Our souls have sight of—we can catch glimpses of.

Immortal sea—the ocean of eternity.

164. Which brought us hither—whence we came to the world.

165. Travel thither—*i.e.*, dwell on that same eternity.

166. See the children.....shore—*i.e.*, feel once more the happy feelings of childhood.

167. And hear.....evermore—i.e., and taste once more the joys of heaven.

**Explanation :** Stanza 9.—How delightful it is that even when our soul has become almost completely devoid of spiritual fire through long contact with the world, it still retains a spark of immortality, traces of the heavenly glory which is so transient. The recollections of our happy childhood produce in me a feeling of constant thankfulness to God. I feel thankful to Him not for the happiness and freedom which I enjoy, nor for the innocent faith which children have in all moods and at all times, nor even for their hopeful nature—though these no doubt are blessings well worthy of gratitude. I rather feel thankful for the persistent doubts I feel as to the nature of sensible objects; for the fits of utter dreaminess and abstraction when all things appear to be unreal and unsubstantial; for vague doubts as though I were a being dwelling in an unreal world; for divine feelings in the presence of which the earthly part of us shrinks into nothingness. Yes, I feel thankful for the feelings of early childhood; the dim memories of our former life in heaven, which, whatever their origin may be, are the prime source of all our true happiness and the chief guiding influence to direct our lives aright. They support us in our hour of trial; they give value and zest to life; they have such influence over us that they can make our life, with all its turmoil and activity, appear very brief as compared with that Eternity during which we were unborn. I feel thankful also for truths that dawn upon the mind and are of everlasting verity, truths which nothing can efface or destroy—neither indifference nor restless activity, neither boyhood nor manhood, neither pain nor sorrow. Hence it follows that in an hour of quiet contemplation, steeped though we may be in worldliness, we can catch glimpses of that ocean of eternity whence we came to the present world, and can in a moment realise that same Eternity, feeling once

more the happy feelings of childhood, and tasting once more the joys of heaven.

168 Then—i.e., seeing that it is possible for us to catch glimpses of the heaven we have lost.

168—170. These lines are a repetition of ll. 19-21.

171. In thought—mentally; in imagination.

Join your throng—share your rejoicings.

172. That pipe—that play upon the pipe, viz., birds.

Play—gambol about, viz. lambs.

174. Gladness of the may—influence of the happy spring season.

175. Radiance—glory; the heavenly gleam.

177. Hour of splendour—hour when I beheld a splendour.

180 Strength in what remains behind—consolation in the blessings still left to us.

N. B.—What these blessings are that have been still left to us, are enumerated in the remaining lines of this stanza.

181 Primal sympathy—childhood's instinctive sense of fellow-feeling with Nature.

182. Which having been.....be—which can never be lost

183. Soothing thoughts that spring—chastening effect upon our life.

184. Out of human suffering—which our experience of the sorrows and trials of man's life brings with it.

185. Faith that looks through death—faith that dwells on the eternal life to come and regards death as only a medium to attain that life.

186. In years—in length of life.

Philosophic mind—a habit of calmness and self-restraint.

Explanation : Stanza 10.—Since it is still possible for man to catch glimpses of the heaven he has lost, let the birds

sing their merry songs, let the young lambs frisk about to the sound of the tabor, for we will share their joys in imagination. Make yourselves merry ye musicians and ye players, and ye those others who feel the happy influence of the spring season without giving vent to your joys in outward demonstration. It does not matter if I have ceased to perceive a heavenly glory in things such as I used to do in my childhood ; it does not matter if that glory I perceived in grass and flower should never return. We shall not feel sorry for this loss : on the contrary we shall rejoice in those blessings that are still left to us, viz (1) the original sense of kinship between man and nature, an instinct which can never be lost ; (2) the chastening of our thoughts that comes through our experience of the sorrows and trials of life ; (3) the faith that dwells on the eternal life to come and regards death as only a medium to attain that life.

188 Forebode—predict

Severing—cessation, breaking off.

Our loves—The plural 'loves' suggests the poet's belief that his love for Nature was returned ; our mutual love.

189. My heart of hearts—the inmost recesses of my heart.

Your might—your powerful influence.

190 Relinquished—given up

One delight—viz., the heavenly glory.

191. To live beneath.....sway—with the result that I feel your influence constantly 'To live' is here a gerundial infinitive, denoting effect, having the force of an adverb, modifying the verb 'relinquished.'

192 Fret—flow with hurried movement—as though chafing against restraint.

193. When I tripped lightly as they—i.e., when I was a boy.

194. Innocent brightness—pure gleams.

A new-born day—the morning sun.

195. Yet—even in this age.

196. Gather.....sun—hang on the western horizon at sunset.

197. Take a sober colouring—appear of a solemn hue.

From an eye that—from the fact that my eye.

198. Kept watch o'er man's mortality—surveyed the course of human life which ends in death.

199. Another race—a different mode of life.

Other palms—different triumphs. The palm leaf is an emblem of victory.

Are won—have been gained by me.

Another race hath been and other palms are won—I have been leading a different kind of life—a life of keen competition, and my successes have been of a different nature from my boyish successes

Prof. Webb explains this line to mean—'A new course of strenuous self-discipline has been gone through, and has brought me new spiritual gains to balance the loss I have sustained.'

200. Thanks to—I am obliged to; these 'spiritual gains of manhood are solely attributable to

The human heart by which we live—our human sympathy without which life itself would be insupportable.

201. Tenderness—natural feelings of pity.

202. Blows—blooms.

The meanest flower that blows—the commonest object of nature.

203. Thoughts that do.....tears—feelings that are too deep and intense to find fit expression even in tears.

Explanation : Stanza II.—And O ye natural objects (fountains, pastures, hills, and groves), do not predict the cessation of our mutual love: for in the inmost recesses of my heart I feel your powerful influence still. There is only one happiness that I have lost since childhood—that of living under your constant influence, though as a matter of

fact that influence is constant still, only a little less than in childhood. I still love the brooks that angrily flow down their channels, nay more than when I was a boy. I still feel the beauty of the sunrise and the golden glow of sunset, which presents a solemn hue to my eyes because of my conviction of man's perishable nature. During this interval I have been leading a different kind of life, and winning different kinds of success from those that marked my boyhood—*viz.*, spiritual life attended with spiritual gains, gains that are solely attributable to our innate human sympathy which is the chief support of our moral nature, and to other innate human feelings such as pity, joy and fear. The commonest object of nature, such as a humble flower, gives rise in my mind to feelings that are too deep and intense to find fit expression even in tears.

**Critical Note.**—"The close of this sublime ode restores to the reader's mind that repose which is needful after the soarings, and the sinkings of the strain; the elegy ends in a hymn of praise: the estrangement in reconciliation."

—*Aubrey de Vere.*

---

305.

BRAHMA.

(Page 330)

Introduction.

The subject of this poem is Brahma—one of the three gods of what has been improperly called the Hindu Trinity. These three gods are Brahma the Creator, Vishnu, the Preserver, and Siva the Destroyer. Each one of the three has special worshippers; each one forms the centre of a sect: each one claims supremacy over the rest of the Hindu Deities. It is in this spirit of asserting his own supremacy that Brahma is made to speak in this poem.

Notes.

1. The red slayer—the murderer stained with blood.  
Slays—kills.

2. The slain—the murdered man.

3. Subtle—mysterious.

**Explanation : Stanza 1.**—If a murderer thinks that it is he that has killed his victim, or if the victim himself should suppose that in being killed he is annihilated, they are both mistaken : they only betray their ignorance of the mysterious ways in which I keep things in existence, make them disappear, and bring them back to life.

5. Far or forgot—however distant or forgotten a thing may be.

Near—present and vivid.

6. Shadow and sunlight—light and darkness.

8. One—alike

Shame and fame—good and bad name.

**Explanation : Stanza 2.**—However distant or forgotten a thing may be, it is present and vivid to me. Light and darkness make no difference to me. The gods of the past are visible to me, and good and bad name are alike in my eyes.

9. Reckon ill—make a mistake.

Leave me out—take no account of me in their conduct.

10. Me they fly—run away from me ; profess atheism.

I am the wings—it is I who give them the power of flight

11. I am the doubter and the doubt—if any one doubts my supremacy, it is I that give rise to that doubt, as well as constitute the doubt itself ; i.e., I am both the *occasion* and *object* of the doubt in the case of the sceptic.

12. Hymn—a song in praise of God.

Brahmin—the highest of the Hindu castes, so called because they were supposed to have sprung from the head of Brahma the Creator ; here the name represents a religious man

**Explanation : Stanza 3.**—They who leave me out of

account are greatly mistaken, for even if they run away from me, it is I that give them the means for flight, and if they doubt my supremacy, then again, it is I who am both the occasion and the object of that doubt. When the Brahmin sings a song in praise of God, it is really to me that his hymns are addressed. In other words, the atheist, the sceptic, and the man of faith are all indebted to me for their different attitudes towards religion.

13. Pine for—long to gain an entrance into.

14. Pine in vain—are disappointed in their eager wishes.

The Sacred Seven—the seven Rishis or sages of the Hindu faith; called the “*Sapta Rishi*,” afterwards changed into a constellation known to the Greeks as the Pleides.

15. Meek—humble.

Lover of the good—man of virtue.

16. Turn thy back on—do not care for.

Explanation : Stanza 4.—The great gods long for entrance into my dwelling-place. The ‘Seven’ Sages also entertain the same wish, which they cannot gain. But the humble man of virtue can obtain this bliss, which is superior to the bliss of heaven.

---

324.

SIR GALAHAD.

(Page 358).

Introduction.

Sir Galahad was the son of Sir Lancelot, one of the knights of King Arthur’s Round Table. The history of King Arthur and his Round Table is given by Tennyson in a poem of twelve books, called the *Idylls of the King*. This poem, which was first published in 1842, aims, not at a narration of action, but at presenting a type of character. Sir Galahad was so pure in character that he saw the Holy



Grail, the cup from which Christ drank at the Last Supper, afterwards filled with the blood which flowed from his wounds. Joseph of Arimathæa brought it to Glastonbury, and there it lay for some time; and the belief was that if any man could touch or see it, he was at once healed of all his ills. But then an evil age came upon the world, and the Holy Grail disappeared. The Knights of King Arthur made a vow to seek it, but only two of them—Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale—were successful in the quest. The whole story of the quest of the Holy Grail is told in Tennyson's poem of that name.

### Notes.

1. Good blade—trusty sword. Carves—cuts to pieces.  
Casques—helmets.
2. Tough lance—stout spear.  
Thrusteth sure—never fails to pierce the armour of an enemy
3. As the strength of ten—like the combined strength of ten warriors. Of course 'ten' here is indefinite
4. My heart is pure—I have a stainless character.
5. Shattering—pouring out a succession of loud notes that as it were rend the air.  
Shrilleth high—makes a loud shrill noise
6. Brands—swords.  
Shiver on—break to pieces as they clash against.  
The steel—i.e., armour.
7. Splintered—broken in pieces; "shivered."  
Spear-shaft—long wooden handle of a spear.  
Crack and fly—break into little pieces scattering themselves in all directions.
8. Reel—stagger with the effects of the shock of the encounter.
9. Roll—tumble down on the ground.  
Clanging—resounding with the clash of arms.

**Lists**—arena ; an enclosed space where a tournament was held.

**10. Tide of combat**—*i.e.* , the tournament.

**Stands**—stops ; is over.

**11-12. Perfume and flower.....hands**—In the old days of chivalry, tournaments were held on some open plain enclosed by a fencing, within which the knights, armed at all points, fought on horseback, sometimes killing their adversary, sometimes only careeing with the lance to show their skill. Overlooking the lists were galleries in which ladies sat, and scattered flowers &c , upon the successful combatants.

**Explanation : Stanza 1.**—My trusty sword cuts through the helmets of warriors ; my stout spear never fails to pierce through the strongest armour ; in the matter of bodily strength I am a host in myself, and the secret of this strength is the purity of my character. During a tournament, the trumpet blows loudly , swords break to pieces as they clash upon the armour ; the wooden handle of the spear is broken into pieces and the fragments are scattered in all directions ; both knight and horse stagger in the shock of the encounter, and tumble down on the ground in the middle of the arena. And when the fight comes to an end, the ladies seated in the galleries honour the victor by showering flowers and perfume upon him.

**13. Bend**—direct.

**14. On whom**—on those on whom.

**15. For them I battle**—it is for their sake, as their champion, that I fight. One of the offices of the true knight was to rescue maidens in distress, to champion the cause of oppressed womanhood.

**16. Shame**—dishonour. **Thrall**—slavery.

**17. Drawn above**—directed towards God.

**18. Crypt**—an underground cell in a church.

**Shrine**—holy places.

**My knees are bowed**—sc. in prayer and penance.

21. More bounteous aspects—looks of richer blessing—*viz.* the looks of angels, which are more bounteous in favours than the looks of women. Beam—shine.

22. Mightier transports—more ecstatic joys—than those of love for women.

Move—excite. Thrill—inspire.

23. Fair—blameless.

24. Virgin—spotless ; innocent and pure.

In work and will—not only in actual conduct but also in intention.

Explanation : Stanza 2.—The looks of women are very enchanting indeed in the eyes of those on whom they bestow their affections ! It is on behalf of women that I always fight—that is, to protect them from dishonour and slavery. But my thoughts are wholly directed towards God, and I am constantly kneeling down in prayer and penance in underground cells and in holy places. I have never experienced a woman's kiss,—nay, never even felt the touch of her hand. And the reason of this is that looks of richer blessing than those of women shine upon me, and joys more ecstatic than those of earthly love excite and inspire me. It is thus by means of faith and prayer that I maintain my heart in blameless purity not only in actual conduct but also in intentions.

25 Stormy—accompanied by a storm ; or, which is the sign of a storm.

Crescent—the crescent moon.

26. Before me swims—floats before my eyes.

27. Stems—trunks of trees.

Glow—appears brightly lit up.

28. Noise—*i.e.*, music.

31. Stalls—seats in the chancel of a church for the clergy. Void—empty ; unoccupied. Wide—open.

32. Tapers—candles.

33. Fair gleams—beautifully shines.

Snowy—white. Altar-cloth—a cloth spread over the altar, the place in a church where offerings are made.

34. Silver vessels—the church plate.

35. Censer—the vessel which bears the incense.

Swings—waves to and fro.

36. Solemn chaunts—religious songs.

Resound—are heard. Between—in the intervals of worship.

Explanation : Stanza 3.—When the crescent moon sets amid storms, I see a light floating before my eyes, and as I ride through the dark trees, the forest appears to be brightly lit up, and the sound of hymns is borne on my ears. Then I fancy that I have come upon some secret place of worship. I hear a voice, but I can discover no one in that solitary spot ; the church is empty ; the doors lie open ; the candles burn brightly ; the white altar-cloth dazzles in the light ; the church plate sparkles ; a bell rings ; incense is offered ; and religious hymns are sung in the intervals of worship.

37. Meres—lakes.

38. Magic bark—supernatural boat.

39. Steers—rows the boat.

40. A gentle sound—so. is suddenly heard.

An awful light—a bright dazzle is suddenly seen by me.

42. The holy Grail—the holy dish in which Christ took the Last Supper. See Introduction to this poem.

43. Folded—crossed. Stoles—long robes.

44. Sleeping—motionless. Sail—float through the air.

45. Blessed vision—holy sight.

Blood of God—See Introduction.

46. My spirit beats her mortal bars—at the sight of this blessed vision my soul tries to escape from the body in the same way as a bird dashes against the bars of a cage to fly out.

47. Down dark tides—through the darkness of the sky.

The glory—the glorious vision—the angels bearing the Holy Grail. Slides—floats.

48. And starlike.....stars—and is soon lost in the starlit sky.

Explanation; Stanza 4.—It sometimes happens that floating on the surface of a lovely hill-lake I discover a magic boat, into which I leap, and without any one guiding the boat, I drift in it until it is dark. Suddenly I hear a gentle sound and see a dazzling light, and soon notice a group of three angels carrying the Holy Grail, with their feet crossed, their figures robed in white gowns, and their wings motionless. What a glorious spectacle it is—the sight of Christ's blood! My soul, in its eagerness to follow the blessed vision, tries to escape from the confinement of the body in the same way as birds dash against the bars of a cage to fly out. This eagerness on the part of my soul continues all the time I see the heavenly object floating through the dark air and finally mingling its light with the light of the stars.

49. Goodly charger—handsome war-horse.

Borne—riding.

50. Dreaming—hushed in sleep.

51. Ere—before; *i.e.*, to announce.

52. Dumb with snow—*i.e.*, the snow lying on the streets deadens the sound of his horse's hoofs.

53. Crackles—beats with a crackling sound suggesting that the storm is a hailstorm.

The leads—*i. e.*, the roofs of houses, which were covered with sheets of lead to make them rain-proof.

54. Ringing—*i. e.*, beating with a sharp sound.

Springs—rebounds. Brand and mail—*i. e.*, my sword and armour.

55. Dark—darkness.

56. Gilds—brightens; lends a lustre to.

Driving hail—hailstones blown by the wind. 'Driving' is an active participle used in a passive sense.

57. Height—hill

58. Branchy thicket—a bush with thick foliage.

Shelter—protection from the storm.

59. Blessed forms—angelic shapes.

Whistling—blowing with loud gusts.

60. Waste fens—desolate marshy regions.

Windy—swept by the wind.

**Explanation: Stanza 5.**—When at night I ride on my horse through towns hushed in sleep, I hear the cry of the cock heralding the Christmas morning. The streets are covered with snow which deadens the sound of my horse's hoofs. The storm beats with a cracking sound upon the roofs of houses, and upon my sword and armour, from which the hail-stones rebound with a sharp sound. But a heavenly light gleams through the darkness and lights up the hailstones driven hither and thither by the wind. I leave the plain and ascend the hill; but I find no tree or bush underneath which I can take shelter from the storm. But I see angelic shapes flying about in the roaring storm over desolate marshy regions and wind-swept fields.

61. Maiden knight—a knight of spotless virtue. Sir Galahad was surnamed the "Maiden Knight" on account of his purity of character.

63. Yearn—long.

To breathe the airs of heaven—to go to heaven.

64. That often meet me here—of which I often obtain a foretaste on earth.

65. Muse on—reflect on.

Joy that will not cease—eternal bliss.

66. Pure spaces.....beams—*i.e.*, the bright regions of Heaven.

67. Pure lilies—In Christian art the lily is a symbol of chastity and peace. Of—*i.e.*, symbols of.

68. Odours—sweet smell.

Haunt my dreams—persist even in my sleep.

69. Stricken—being touched.

70. Mortal—earthly.

71. Weight and size &c.—*i.e.*, my body.

72. Touched—affected.

Turned to finest air—made ethereal.

Explanation : Stanza 6.—Being a knight of spotless virtue I am inspired by such strong hope that I never feel fear. I often long to go to heaven, a foretaste of which I obtain even on earth. I ponder over the eternal bliss of heaven and the bright abodes of Paradise, where there is everlasting peace, and of which I cannot help thinking even in sleep. Heavenly influences have such power over me that my whole being, including my body, my limbs, my armour, seems at times to become ethereal.

73. Broken—scattered ; dispersed.

74. Mountains-walls—the passes or gorges of the mountains.

75. Rolling—echoing and re-echoing.

Organ-harmony—the music of an organ.

76. Swells up—reaches my ears.

Shakes and falls—sometimes loud, sometimes low.

77. Copses—low bushes. Nod—wave to and fro.

78. Flutter—flap. Hoyer clear—speak from above in an audible tone.

80. The prize—viz, the Holy Grail, the reward of thy quest

81. Hostel—an inn. Hall—lordly mansion ; nobleman's residence.

Grange—farmhouse.

82. Ford—a place where a river is so shallow that it can be crossed on foot.

Rale—fencing ; enclosure.

83. Whate'er betide—whatever the consequence may be ; not fearing anything.

**Explanation : Stanza 7.**—The clouds are dispersed in the sky, and through the gorges of the hills I can hear the music of an organ echoing and re-echoing sometimes loud and sometimes low. Then I see the trees and the bushes, waving in the wind, and soon I notice wings flapping in the air, and a voice ringing clearly in my ears, saying, "O true and saintly knight I ride on, you have very nearly found the Holy Grail, the object of your quest."

Thus I ride on, past inns, mansions, and farmhouses, and by the side of bridges, fords, parks, and fences. I ride fully armed, fearing nothing, and will go on riding until I have discovered the Holy Grail.

---

325.

BREAK, BREAK, BREAK.

(Page 360.)

Introduction.

This lyric was composed, as the poet himself tells us "in



a Lincolnshire lane at 5 o'clock in the morning between blossoming hedges," but probably the scene here imagined is Clevedon, a little watering place on the Bristol Channel, where Arthur Hallam, Tennyson's bosom friend, lies buried. The poem beautifully expresses the poet's old longing to see his deceased friend.

### Notes.

1 The repetition is intended to suggest the *ceaseless* breaking of the waves upon the coast.

2. Thy cold grey stones—the rocky sea-coast. *Thy*, because it is the *sea-coast*.

3. I would—I wish. My tongue could utter—I could express in words.

5. Well for—*i.e.*, how happy he is.

9. Stately—majestic.

10. Haven—harbour; mooring-place.

11. O for—O how I long to feel.

Vanished hand—the hand of one who is no more. Probably the reference is to Arthur Henry Hallam, Tennyson's bosom friend who died at Vienna in September 1833, and on whose death the poet wrote his immortal elegy *In Memoriam* published in 1850.

12. A voice that is still—the voice of one who is dead.

14. Crags—steep rocks.

15. Tender grace—delicate beauty, *i.e.*, love and happiness.

A day that is dead—*i.e.*, the year of my friendship with Hallam.

### Explanation.

Let the sea-waves dash upon the wet grey rocky coast ceaselessly. The sight of them raises in my mind thoughts

that I am unable to express in words. How happy the fisherman's boy feels as he shouts while playing with his sister ! How happy the sailor boy feels as he sings in his boat lying in the harbour ! The majestic ships enter the port under the overhanging hills. It is a delightful scene ; but personally I cannot help feeling a keen longing to grasp the hand and to hear the voice of my deceased friend Hallam. Yes, let the sea dash ceaselessly upon the rock-bound coast ; but I can never again enjoy the happiness of those few years I passed in friendship with Hallam.

---

333.

## FROM 'IN MEMORIAM.'

(Page 366).

## Introduction.

This is an extract from *In Memoriam*, an elegy written by Tennyson to mourn the death of his dearest friend Arthur Henry Hallam, son of Hallam the historian, a young barrister who was the poet's college mate, and who died at Vienna, September 15, 1833. For 17 years the poet kept busy over the composition of this immortal elegy, the best in the English language. The purpose of the poem is however not merely the expression of grief, but also the expression of love which Death has invaded, but not impaired. The earlier portion of the poem describes the rude shock of grief ; then, when the first blow has past, come the questionings of faith ; next, the calm, the hope ; and finally joy.

The poem here given belongs to the third stage—the stage of calm hope. In it the poet's individual desires for the future are inseparably interwoven with his longings for the reign of new principles and new character, for the introduction of better customs, and banishment of unrighteousness, until humanity shall reproduce in a regenerated society the lofty character of Christ.

## Notes

1. Wild bells—the bells that are rung at midnight on the 31st of December to usher in the New Year.

Wild sky—rough wintry sky,—because New Year falls in mid-winter.

2. Flying cloud—clouds driven by the wind.

3. In the night—because it is at 12 o'clock at night that the old year passes away and the new year commences.

Explanation : Stanza 1.—Ring, O ye merry New Year bells, and fill the wintry sky with your loud peals. Clouds are drifting in the wind ; a white frost is lying on the ground , the old year is passing away at the hour of midnight ; ring ye bells, and let the old year pass.

5. Ring out the old—drive out the old year with your peals.

Ring in the new—usher in the new year with your peals.

6. Across the snow—i.e., from one end of the town to the other.

8. The false—all forms of pretence and unreality.

Explanation : Stanza 2.—Let the old year pass away, and the new year be ushered in. Ring, ye happy bells, across the snow-covered fields. The old year is passing away ; let it pass, but let it also take away with it all forms of pretence and unreality, and let the new year bring with it whatever is sincere and genuine.

9. Saps the mind—weakens the mental energy ; undermines intellectual vigour.

10. That here we see no more—that are dead.

11. Feud of rich and poor—the unequal distribution of wealth in the world ; the struggle between wealth and poverty.

12. Redress to all mankind—reparation of everybody's wrongs.

Explanation : Stanza 3.—Let the grief we feel for those that are dead pass away because it weakens mental energy. Let the struggle between wealth and poverty cease, and let there be a fairer distribution of happiness among all classes.

13. Slowly dying cause—something that men no longer think worthy to fight for ; political ideals growing obsolete at the present day.

14. Ancient forms of party strife—the bitter hostility with which parliamentary struggles were carried on in the old days.

15. Nobler modes of life—*i e.*, modes of life not based on distinctions of wealth or birth, but on nobility of character.

16. Sweeter manners—gentle outward behaviour springing from real nobility of the heart, not from mere conformity to fashion.

Purer laws—laws aimed at promoting the welfare of the whole nation, not the interests of particular parties.

Explanation : Stanza 4.—Let those institutions that have grown effete and are no longer worth upholding, pass away with the old year. Let the bitter hostility with which party struggles were carried on in the old days, also pass away. And let the new year bring with it true gentility of behaviour springing from the heart, and let it also bring better laws,—laws aimed at promoting the welfare of the whole nation, and not merely the interests of particular parties.

17. Want—the evils of poverty. Care—the growing anxieties of life. Sin—the prevalence of vice.

18. Faithless coldness—sceptical indifference characteristic of this age.

19. Mournful rhymes—sorrowful verses ; elegy.

20. Fuller minstrel—the abler poet, the poet who may sing of hope and joy.

Explanation : Stanza 5.—Let the old year take away with itself the poverty, the anxiety, the sinfulness, the irreligion, the uncordiality that mark the present age. Let it also see an end of the poetry of sorrow, such as this elegy of mine, and let it usher in the poetry of hope and joy.

21. Place—high position. Blood—high birth.

22 Civic slander—the evil that men speak about one another owing to political differences.

Spite—malice.

23. Love of truth—veracity. And right—virtue.

24. Common love of good—unselfishness ; philanthropy.

Explanation : Stanza 6.—Let the old year take away with it the empty boast of rank and birth, the evil gossip men are in the habit of circulating about their political opponents, and the tendency to bear private grudge. Let the new year introduce veracity, virtue and philanthropy.

25. Old shapes—forms of sickness that were once common, *e.g.*, consumption, cholera, leprosy, the plague.

Foul—loathsome.

26. Narrowing—tending to make men selfish.

Lust of gold—avarice ; greed for money.

27. Thousand wars of old—war, which is a relic of old-world barbarism.

28 Thousand years of peace—the Millennium—an imaginary age which the poets talk of as an age of unbroken peace and happiness.

Explanation : Stanza 7.—Let the old year take away with it forms of sickness that used to be common ; let it also take away that avarice which tends to make men selfish. Let war, which is a relic of old-world barbarism, die out, and let the new year usher in the Millennium.

29. Valiant—brave. Man—race of men.

30. Larger—more liberal and sympathetic.

Kindlier hand—more ready and willing to help others.

31. Darkness of the land—i.e., ignorance and superstition prevailing through the country.

32. The Christ that is to be—the future Christ, the Messiah; universal peace and happiness.

Explanation: Stanza 8.—Let the new year bring a race of men distinguished for true courage and freedom, by greater liberality of views and greater readiness to help others. Let the ignorance and superstition prevailing through the country disappear, and let it be succeeded by the reign of universal peace and happiness.

346.

## A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL.

(Page 378.)

Introduction.

This poem was first published in a magazine entitled *Men and Women* in 1855.

The 'Grammarian' referred to in the poem is an abstract type, and not any particular individual. He is a man who made a special study of Greek grammar in accordance with the practice of the scholars of the tenth and eleventh centuries—the age following what is called the "Revival of learning." The revival of Learning, that is, of Greek learning, began in the tenth century, and was caused by the following circumstances:—

- (1) the establishment of universities;
- (2) the cultivation of the modern languages;
- (3) the multiplication of books and the extension of the art of writing;

(4) the study of the Roman Law;

(5) the return to the study of the Latin language in its ancient models of purity. All these factors were at work down to the fifteenth century.

This poem describes the funeral of a scholar whose life was devoted to the pursuit of what he believed to be useful knowledge—viz., knowledge of Greek grammar in all its minute details. The man was an Italian, not an Englishman;—for we must remember that the revival of Greek learning had its origin in Italy. He was so passionately devoted to his studies that he disdained to enjoy life, in the world's sense, until he had mastered the truth he sought. A company of his disciples are represented as bearing his coffin for burial on the top of a high mountain, that lofty summit being the only fit place of burial for a man of such lofty linguistic attainments. As they bear the coffin, one of them tells the story of his life, and expatiates on the praises of the deceased scholar. He was endowed with graces of face and form; but his youth had been given so wholly to learning that it became cramped and withered. He had determined to devour learning to the last atom. He hoped to live a sublime life after he had acquired all the knowledge that he could derive from books. Until this had been accomplished, he scorned to enjoy life in the worldly sense of the term. Before *living*, he wished to learn *how to live*; for he believed that the enjoyment of the present hour, to the neglect of the great future, was a task worthy only of "dogs and apes," not of man, who has the whole of eternity at his disposal. Deeper, therefore, he dived into his books, until he was afflicted with some painful diseases; but still he refused to desist. His thirst for knowledge was unquenchable. He considered the cultivation of the mind as an all-important duty in the discharge of which he was willing to sacrifice his body. He did not care for fame; neither did he care for failure. He wanted no payment by

instalment; he could afford to wait, and, thus even at the actual moment of death, he studied his favourite grammar.—

“So with the throttling hand of Death at strife,  
Ground he at grammar.”

And so his devoted disciples take him for sepulture to a place

“Where meteors shoot, clouds form,  
Lightnings are loosened,  
Stars come and go,”

### Notes

. The Revival of Learning—the name of a literary movement which began in Italy during the middle ages when scholars devoted an immense amount of labour and enthusiasm to the work of collecting and copying Greek manuscripts, translating them into their vernaculars, and studying minutely the rules of Greek grammar.

1. This corpse—*viz*, the dead body of the Grammarian.

2. Singing together—singing in a chorus.

3. Leave we—let us avoid.

Crofts—small inclosed fields, such as are a common feature of Italian landscape.

Vulgar—*i.e.*, inhabited by illiterate people.

Thorpes—hamlets; little villages.

4. Tether—a rope or chain for tying domestic animals to a post, so as to leave them some liberty to graze about.

5. Sleeping safe—lying in undisturbed calm.

Bosom—surface.

6. Cared for—watched over (by Nature).

Cock-crow—day dawn; the early morning, when the cock crows.

7. Look out—peep forth out of the window to see whether the morning has dawned.

If yonder be not day again—whether that light we see over there is not the faint light of the dawn.



8. Rimming—forming as it were a fringe along.

Rock-row—a line of rocks.

*N B*—Ryland points to this word as a bad instance of Browning's use of awkward, unnatural construction, and grotesque rhyme. Compare lines 73, 98, 112, 144 &c.

9. The appropriate country—a fit region for his burial.

10. Rarer—of a finer quality than usual.

Intenser—of stronger force than usual.

11. Self-gathered for an outbreak—concentrated at one point for a long time and therefore ready to burst forth. The expression is metaphorical. Just as water that goes on collecting at one place for a long time, bursts forth into a flood, in the same way, human thought, lying gathered in its own receptacles ('self-gathered') suddenly issues forth in a stream.

As it ought—as is meet and proper. It is fit and proper that human thought should vent itself in a flood after lying gathered for some time at one spot.

12. Chafes—burns.

Censer—a metal vessel used for burning incense in.

Chafes in the censer—The phrase is again metaphorical. Just as incense in the censer smoulders or burns slowly for some time, and then suddenly blazes forth, in the same way human thought, after slumbering for a time, breaks out into redoubled activity.

13. Unlettered plain—the plain country (as opposed to the hill regions) which is peopled by ignorant rustics; village areas which are not centres of learning.

Its herd and crop—i.e., let us leave those rustics to tend their herds of cattle and to raise their crops of grain,—without asking them to join in the funeral of the Grammarian, with whom they have nothing in sympathy.

14. Seek we sepulture—let us try to bury him.

15. Cited to the top—with cities built all along its slopes, upon the highest summit.

16. Crowded with culture—i.e., peopled with educated and refined inhabitants.

17. Peaks—hill-tops Soar—are high.

But one the rest excels—but one of these peaks is higher than all others

18. Clouds overcome it—it is so high that clouds always rest upon it.

19. Yonder sparkle—that gleam of light we see over there.

Is the citadel's—is a light issuing from the fort of the city. It is to be noted that the cities of mediæval Italy were all fortified places, and had each a fort or citadel of its own.

20. Circling its summit—surrounding the top.

21. Thither our path lies—that is the spot we have to go to.

Wind we up the heights—let us ascend the slopes of the mountain.

22. Wait ye the warning?—are you waiting for the signal to start?

23. Low—having nothing lofty about it.

Was the level's—was a life not marked by any high aspirations: was of the average kind. And the night's—i.e., it was a life marked by ignorance.

24. He's for the morning—this scholar (the Grammarian) was a champion of the revival of learning.

25. Step to a tune—let us march rhythmically.

Square chests—with your breasts well stretched out

26. Ware the beholders—take care there are spectators on the way watching us, hence we should present as neat an

appearance as possible. 'Ware' is an abbreviated form of 'beware.'

**Explanation :** Lines 1—28.—Let us start and carry the dead body of the Grammarian for burial. Let us sing in a chorus as we march. Let us pass by the village area, the petty hamlets peopled by ignorant rustics,—let them lie in undisturbed calm until next morning, let them repose in peace. Peep forth, and see whether that light we see over there is not the faint twilight of another day-dawn, forming a sort of fringe along the line of rocks. That is a fit region for burying this great scholar—that high peak which the daylight first touches. In that place man's thoughts are of a finer quality and a stronger force than usual. There they are concentrated at one spot, and therefore, like pent-up waters, they are, after a time, ready to burst forth in a flood. Or rather, just as incense smoulders in the censer for some time and then suddenly blazes forth, in the same way man's thoughts, after slumbering for a time, break out into redoubled activity. Let us pass by the plain region peopled by ignorant rustics whom we had better leave to the tending of their cattle and the growing of their crops of grain: they cannot possibly be expected to join in the funeral procession of this Grammarian, with whom they have nothing in sympathy. Let us bury this scholar on the top of a high mountain with cities built all along its slopes upto the highest summit, cities peopled by educated and refined people. All the mountain-tops are high, but one of them is higher than all others, so high that it is always enveloped in clouds. That gleam of light we see over there is issuing from the fort of the city and encircling its head. It is to this city that we have to go. Let us ascend the slopes of the mountain. Why are you pausing? Are you waiting for the signal to start? Our life, as compared with this great scholar's, had nothing lofty about it; it was a life devoid of high aspiration, and enveloped in the darkness of ignorance; whereas this scholar was a man who was always a champion of the

revival of learning Let us march rhythmically, as if to the accompaniment of music. Let us stretch out our breasts, and keep our heads erect, remembering that there are crowds standing to see the funeral procession For this is our master whom we are carrying on our shoulders—a man of wide renown and of peaceful life, now dead.

29 Sleep—*i.e.*, let them be undisturbed. Imperative mood

Crop and herd—*i.e.*, the “unlettered plain” of line 13. Vocative case

Darkling—gradually hidden in darkness as the night approaches Thorpe and croft—See line 3, and notes

30 Safe from the weather—well protected from the inclemencies of the weather; in the shelter of the hills.

31 He whom—*i.e.*, the Grammarian

Convoy—escort A ‘convoy’ properly means an armed ship accompanying a merchant vessel for greater safety.

Aloft—on the hill top.

33. Thy face—features as handsome as those of Apollo, the sun-god ‘Thy’ refers to Apollo

And throat—‘throat’ here represents ‘gift of music.’ Apollo was also the god of music and poetry.

34 Lyric Apollo—Apollo, the god of poetry and song ‘Lyric’ is a kind of poetry the chief function of which is to depict emotion.

35 Nameless—unknown to fame; obscure

Spring—Spring is the earliest and gayest season of the year, and hence in literature frequently represents youth, which is the prime of life

Take note—become aware of the fact.

How should spring take note winter would follow?—Just as during the gay spring season we cannot

even conceive the possibility of dull winter ever coming again, in the same way, during the happy and healthful period of youth we cannot think of the misery of ill-health.

37. Till lo—when suddenly.

The little touch—i.e., some disease, which seemed trifling at first, attacked him.

And youth was gone—Youth vanished as suddenly as autumn sometimes passes into winter after a single frosty night.

38. Cramped—afflicted with pain all over his body.

Diminished—reduced in stature, bent by sickness.

39. Moaned—complained; said in a complaining voice.

Measures—metres. Feet—types of verse. A 'foot' in prosody means two or three syllables having the same kind of accent in a line of poetry.

Anon—later on; after a time; not just now.

40. My dance is finished?—is it true that my work on earth is done? Is my career at an end?

41. That's the world's way—that is the practice of the generality of mankind.

Keep the mountain-side—march closely along the slopes of the hill.

42. Make for—proceed towards.

*N. B.*—The portion enclosed within brackets is a direction to the men forming the funeral procession, as to the way they are to pursue.

43. He knew the signal—he knew that the disease which had afflicted him was a premonitory symptom of death, and that it was therefore his duty to put forth greater effort in the pursuit of his studies.

Stepped on with pride over men's pity—proudly disdained the sympathy of his fellow-men. His friends sympathised with him in his sickness, but he treated their sympathy with proud disdain.

45. Left play for work—gave up all enjoyments and devoted himself more to work.

Grappled with the world—struggled hard with the difficult study of Man which he had undertaken.

46. Bent on escaping—which seemed to be determined to frustrate his endeavours.

47. Scroll—a long roll of paper, which in ancient times served as books.

Furled—gathered up ; closed from view.

48. Show me their shaping—let me see what the ancient sages have said about man. 'Their shaping' means 'the way they have drawn the picture of man.'

49. Theirs who most studied man—those people, namely, who made a special study of man.

Bard—poet. Sage—philosopher.

50. He gowned him—he put on his scholar's gown, i.e., he devoted himself more assiduously to his studies

N.B.—'Him' is here used reflexively, and is equivalent to 'himself'

51. Straight—instantly.

Got by heart—lit. 'committed to memory'—i.e., made a thorough study of. That book—viz., the book of the world.

53. Like lead—i.e., dull

54. Accents uncertain—i.e., confused in speech.

55. Time to taste life—it is time now to enjoy life

56. Up with the curtain—i.e., let the play begin

57. Actual life comes next?—does not real life succeed the life of study?

59. Grant—I may acknowledge that.

Crabbed—crooked ; difficult

63. The comment—commentaries. Along with the text of classics, students have to read commentaries or rather criticism.

61. Know all—study both text and criticism.

Prate—talk in a childish fashion ; talk foolishly.

Most or least—length or shortness of the course.

63. Crumbs—lit 'pieces of bread left on the table after a meal', hence figuratively here 'trifling odds and ends of knowledge, which are generally rejected by others'

Fain—gladly. Eat up the feast—i.e., acquire knowledge in its entirety.

64. Aye—yes Queasy—sick ; inclined to vomit.

Note—Lines 61—64, describe the mediæval scholar's insatiable desire for knowledge. In his eagerness to study everything he could lay his hands on, he could not distinguish between too much and too little. In fact, nothing could be too much for him. He was determined to acquire as much knowledge as he could, including even the trifles rejected by others. Omnivorous as he was in his study, he never felt that disgust which is born of excess.

65. Such a life as he had resolved to live—what a happy life his would be !

66. Learned it—studied life in the abstract.

67. Gathered all books had to give—acquired all the knowledge that could be derived from books. The relative pronoun is understood after 'books.'

Sooner, he spurned it—i.e., any kind of life prior to that, prior to the realisation of his ideal, he scorned.

69. Image the whole—he first wished to form an idea of human life in its entirety.

Execute the parts—i.e., carry out the design of his own life, which was only a part of the whole.

70. Fancy the fabric—form a plan of the whole building.

71. Quite—completely ; in every detail.

Ere you build—before you begin the work of construction.

Quartz—a kind of stone used for building purposes.

Ere steel strike fire from quartz—This is a graphic phrase used poetically for 'before you quarry your building-'

stones.' In quarrying stone with a steel chisel, sparks of fire are often emitted.

72. Mortar—lime used in building work.

Dab—besmear. Ere mortar dab brick—This is another graphic phrase used poetically for 'before you begin to build your walls.'

Explanation : Lines 29—72.—We do not want to disturb the plain region, with its herds of cattle and crops of grain, its inclosed fields and hamlets slowly enveloped in the darkness of night. Let them be undisturbed, well protected from the inclemencies of the weather. The scholar whose dead body we are taking for burial in a procession accompanied by song, was a man who was as handsome as Apollo and who had also Apollo's gift of music. For a long time he lived unknown to fame. Just as during the gay spring season we cannot even conceive the possibility of dull winter ever coming again, in the same way during the happy and healthful period of youth we cannot think of the misery of old age. Well, as a young man he lived a happy life, when suddenly he was afflicted with ill-health, and his youth vanished as quickly as autumn sometimes passes into winter after a single frosty night. He suffered from pain all over his body ; he was bent by sickness ; and in this state he complained, "What ! shall I try new metres, new types of verse later on ? Is it true that my work on earth is done ?" No, he thought ; his work was not done ; he was not like the generality of men. (March closely along the slopes of the hill—march straight in the direction of the city). He took his ill-health as a warning, and thought it therefore his duty to put forth greater effort in the pursuit of his studies. His friends sympathised with him in his sickness, but he treated their sympathy with proud disdain. He gave up all his enjoyments and devoted extra time to his studies. He struggled hard with the difficult study of Man which he had undertaken, and which seemed determin-



ed to frustrate his endeavours. He said to himself, "What are the contents of that book which lies closed before me? Let me see what the ancient poets and sages have said about man—they who had made a special study of man. Let me read that book!" So he put on his scholar's gown—devoted himself more assiduously to his studies, and soon mastered that branch of knowledge (*viz.*, knowledge of human nature) as thoroughly as was possible. Hence we found him to be a very learned man; but at the same time he was also bald,—too much brain work had made him bald. His eyes also were dull and lustreless, and his speech was tottering and confused. Another man, in similar circumstances, would have preferred to enjoy life—to quit his scholarly retirement; but this man rather said, "Is it not true that real life, real enjoyment, comes only when our studies are finished? Let me wait a while; let me postpone my enjoyment of life to a later day, when I shall be free from my studies. Even supposing I have studied all the standard works—difficult as they are—still, the commentaries, the works on criticism yet remain to be studied. I must not leave out anything. Do not talk foolishly of too much or too little, difficult or easy,—such terms have no meaning for a true scholar, who is omnivorous in his reading. I am eager to acquire as much knowledge as I can, including even those insignificant fragments that others omit. And yet; with all this, I do not feel that sense of disgust which is born of overdoing a thing." How happy indeed he pictured his ideal life to be,—the life that he would lead when he had acquired all the knowledge that he could derive from books. Any sort of life earlier than this, prior to the realization of his ideal, he scorned. His principle was to form an idea of human life in its entirety before setting himself to order his own life, which was only a part of the whole;—to form a plan of the whole building in every detail before beginning the work of construction,—before cutting the stones or preparing the brick and mortar that would be needed for raising the walls.

74. Gaping—opening out.

76. Yea—yes ; as I was saying just now.

Peculiar grace—special merit.

76. Hearten—sing it more spiritedly.

Chorus—a song sung by many voices together.

*N B*—This line is again a direction to the men composing the funeral procession

77. That before living he'd learn how to live—that before beginning to lead his own life he wanted to know the true art of living from books.

78. No end to learning—to gather infinite knowledge.

79. Earn the means—acquire the power of leading life properly.

Contrive—manage to find.

80. Use for our earning—some utility for the knowledge that we have acquired.

81. Mistrust—are suspicious about the wisdom of this course.

Time escapes—life is short.

82. Live now or never—if you do not enjoy life now, you will never have the opportunity.

83. What's time ?—*i.e.*, time has no power over man.

Now—*i.e.*, the present moment

Dogs and apes—*i.e.*, men given to sensual indulgence.

84. Man has Forever—man has the whole of eternity at his disposal.

85. Back to his book then—with this thought he resumed his studies.

Deeper drooped his head—*i.e.*, his health declined still further.

86. Calculus—Latin name for stone in the bladder—a very painful disease.

Racked—tortured.

87. Leaden—of a dull colour. Before—already.

*N. B.*—See line 53—

'Yea, but we found him bald too—eye a little bad'

Grew dross of lead—became more dull—as dull in colour as the scum that gathers over molten lead.

88. Tussis—Latin name for 'bronchitis.'

89. 'Now' Master, take a little rest!—This is supposed to be spoken to him by one of his disciples, who was anxious at the sight of his losing health.

Not he—i.e., he still refused to take rest.

90. Caution redoubled—the coffin-bearers are now more careful than before in marching up the slopes of the hill.

91. Step—walk.

Two abreast—two men walking alongside of each other, followed by two others, and so on in a line.

Winds—goes in a zigzag line.

92. Not a whit troubled—without being afraid in the least.

93. Fresher—with more energy

94. Fierce as a dragon—with as much avidity as a thirsty monster.

95. Soul-hydroptic—suffering from dropsy of the soul. Dropsy is a disease characterised by intense thirst. This man was suffering from dropsy of the soul, which means that in his soul he had an insatiable desire for knowledge.

Sacred thirst—desire for knowledge.

96. Sucked at the flagon—drank the waters of knowledge as stored in books.

97. Draw a circle premature—i.e., close a period or cycle of time before it has come to an end.

98. Heedless of far gain—unmindful of the distant good.

99 Greedy for quick returns of profit—anxious to reap immediate gain. The reference is to the maxim of Economics, “Small profits and quick returns”

100. Bad is our bargain—i.e., we shall be losers in the end.

**Explanation :** Lines 73—100.—(At this stage of the song the town-gate is reached, and the market place of the city opens out in front of us). There was one special merit in this great scholar—namely, that before beginning to lead his own life he wanted to know the true art of living, from books,—the true life being, according to him, a life devoted to ceaseless study. He first determined to acquire the power of leading life properly, hoping that God would manage to find good use for the knowledge he would acquire. Other people doubted the truth of this, saying “Life is short ; if you do not enjoy it now, you will never have the opportunity.” But he replied, “Time has no power over man. The present moment may have importance for men given to sensual indulgence, but the true man has the whole of eternity at his disposal.” So saying, he fell back to his studies ; his health declined still further, he was tortured by painful diseases, such as stone in the bladder, bronchitis, &c. ; his eyes, which were already of a dull colour, became more dull and lustreless than ever. His disciples entreated him again to take a little rest ; but he again gave a stern refusal. (At this stage the coffin-bearers walk with more caution, marching two and two up the slopes of the hill, for the path was a narrow one, going in a zig-zag line). Without being afraid in the least, he resumed his studies with greater energy. He drank at the fountain of knowledge with the greatest avidity, because he had an insatiable thirst for knowledge. He believed that if we cut down a period of life (the student period) before the proper time, caring only for the present satisfaction, and not for the distant good, we shall be losers in the end.

101 Was it not great?—was it not a noble thing for him to defer present enjoyment for the sake of distant good?

102. He—God. Burthen—responsibility.

103 Heavenly period—the period of life that man will pass in heaven after the close of his earthly life.

104 Perfect—make perfect; used as a verb, with the accent on the second syllable.

The earthen—*sc.*, period; man's earthly life.

105. Magnify—exalt; assert the superiority of.

The mind—man's intellectual nature, as distinguished from his body.

Show clear—demonstrate clearly.

106. Just what it all meant—*i.e.*, God's design in making man's nature twofold—consisting of the mind and the body.

107. Discount life—accept life at a lower value.

108. Paid by instalment—*i.e.*, enjoyed in little bits at a time.

109 Neck or nothing—to risk all or to risk nothing: desperately.

Heaven's success—success in gaining Heaven.

110. Earth's failure—failure to achieve success on earth.

111. Trust death—*i.e.*, believe that death will lead to a happy hereafter.

112. Hence with—*i.e.*, take away; I despise.

Pale lure—dull attractions.

113. That low man—*i.e.*, the man of low ideals.

Seeks a little thing to do—attempts a small task.

114. Sees it and does it—*i.e.*, he easily realises his ideal.

115. This high man—*viz.*, the Grammarian.

With a great thing to pursue—having a lofty ideal.

116. Dies ere he knows it—perishes in a fruitless endeavour to realise his ideal.

117. Adding one to one—hoarding wealth little by little.

118. His hundred's soon hit—*i.e.*, since he aimed at amassing only a little hoard (only a hundred) he is soon able to fulfil his ambition.

119. Aiming at a million—*i.e.*, entertaining a high ideal.

120. Misses an unit—*i.e.*, falls just short of his ideal.

121 That—*viz.*, the ordinary man ; the low man

Has the world here—*i.e.*, regards the world as his home.

Should he mind the next—if he cares for heaven.

122. Let the world mind him—*i.e.*, the world, which he loved so well, is unable to help him in attaining heaven.

123. This—this man *viz.*, our scholar.

Throws himself on God—depends entirely on God.

Unperplexed—not disturbed by conflicting aims and objects.

125. With the throttling.....strife—even at the very time of death,—when death was grasping at his throat

126. Ground he at grammar—*i.e.*, he continued his study of grammar. 'To grind' is an idiomatic phrase meaning 'laborious study.'

127. Through the rattle—even when the death rattle had actually set in. The "rattle" is a sort of rattling sound in the throat which sets in just before death.

Parts of speech—*i.e.*, the study of grammar.

Rife—prevalent.

128. Stammer—speak indistinctly—on account of loss of speech caused by approaching death.

129. Settled—*i.e.*, gave his final verdict on.

Hoti's business—the right way of using the Greek particle *Hoti*, which means 'because.'

Let it be—*i.e.*, by so doing he found peace.

130. Properly based 'Oun'—*i.e.*, taught the correct basis of using the Greek particle *Oun*, an adverb meaning 'therefore.'

131. Doctrine—*i.e.*, rule.

Enclitic—A word is called *enclitic* when it forms part of another word, varying its significance slightly.

De—another Greek particle, sometimes meaning 'down.'

132. Dead from the waist down—at a moment when the lower half of his body had already become cold and stiff.

Explanation : Lines 101—132.—Was it not a noble resolve to defer present enjoyment for the distant good ? For he had left it to God the task of which He is fond, *viz.*, to make the earthly life perfect so as to befit the eternal life of heaven. He asserted the superiority of man's intellectual nature over his bodily nature. He clearly demonstrated God's design in making man's nature twofold, consisting of the mind and the body. He refused to accept life at a lower value, as fools are in the habit of doing. He refused to enjoy life in little bits ; he wished to have everything or nothing,—no compromise. He wished either to achieve success in attaining Heaven, or failing that, he was prepared to sustain failure even in this life. People asked him, "Art thou not willing to believe that death will be followed by a happy hereafter ?" He answered, "Yes ; I do not care for the dull attractions of life." Our great scholar differed from ordinary men in this respect, that while the latter have only a low ideal and easily realise it, this noble scholar entertained a lofty ideal and perished in striving after the realisation of it. Again, while the vulgar-minded man hoards wealth little by little, and soon succeeds in amassing the little hoard that he has set his heart on, the great man, aspiring after a far higher ideal, falls just short of it. The ordinary man makes the most of his earthly life, and if he cares for heaven, the world, which he loves so well, is unable to help him in the

attainment of it ; whereas this great scholar depended entirely on God, and since he sought God with an undivided heart and mind, he is sure to find Him. Hence, even though he was on the point of death he continued his study of grammar. Even when the death rattle had actually set in, he discoursed on the parts of speech. Even when his voice was failing, and the lower half of his body had become cold and stiff, he spoke on grammatical subjects, such as the right way of using the Greek particles *Hoti*, *Oun*, and *De*.

133. The platform—a level piece of rock on the top of the mountain, where they proposed to bury the grammarian.

134. Hail to—welcome. Purlieus—outskirts ; limits of jurisdiction.

135. Highfliers of the feathered race—birds that are in the habit of soaring high.

136. Curlew—a kind of bird.

*N B*—‘ Swallows’ and ‘ curlews’ are case in apposition with ‘ highfliers of the feathered race’

137. Top-peak—the highest summit.

The multitude below live—the common people live at the foot of the hill. For they can—for they can endure life on the plains.

131. Decided—chose as his ideal.

139. Not to Live but know—not to enjoy life but only to acquire knowledge.

140. Bury this man there ?—will it be proper to bury such a man at the foot of the hill ?

141. Here's his place—this is the fit place of burial for him. Meteors—shooting stars.

Shoot—dart across the sky.

142. Are loosened—play about.

143. Come and go—appear and disappear

Let joy break with the storm—may his soul find happiness in the midst of the storms which blow on the mountain top.



144. Peace let the dew send—may his soul enjoy peace in the dew with which his grave will be covered.

145. Lofty designs—high ideals.

Close in—end in; terminate in.

Like effects—i.e., noble ends; ends as noble as the life was noble.

Lofty designs must close in like effects—a man who entertained such high ideals in his life must naturally find a noble resting-place, a resting-place in keeping with the nobility of his life.

146. Loftily lying—buried in a grave situated at a great height.

147. Loftier than the world suspects—i.e. he was greater than he was ever supposed to be by any one.

148. Living and dying—both in life and in death.

Explanation: Lines 133—148.—We have now reached our destination—the level ledge of rock where we propose to bury our master. Welcome to this high aerial region, the outskirts or the limit upto which high-soaring birds, like swallows and curlews, can fly! This is the highest summit of the mountain. The common people live at the foot of the hills, for they can afford to do so. This man's ideal was not to enjoy life, but to acquire knowledge. Will it therefore be proper to bury such a man down below? No; the proper place of burial for him would be a lofty peak like this, where shooting-stars dart across the sky, where clouds are formed, where lightnings play about, where stars appear and disappear. May his soul find happiness in the midst of the storms of that region! May his spirit enjoy peace in the dew with which his grave will be covered! A man who entertained such high ideals in his life must naturally find a noble resting-place, a resting-place in keeping with the nobility of his life. Let him remain buried on the top of this high mountain: he was a man really greater than he was ever supposed to be, both in life and in death.

348.

## RABBI BEN EZRA.

(Page 384).

## Introduction

This poem first appeared in *Dramatis Personæ* in 1864.

'Rabbi' is a title frequently prefixed to the names of old Jewish writers on ecclesiastical subjects. 'Ben' is a corruption of 'Ibn,' which means 'son of.'

Rabbi Ben Ezra is a historical personage, whose full name was Abraham Ben Meir Ben Ezra. He was one of the most eminent Jewish writers of the middle ages, being born at Toledo, Spain, in 1090 A. D. He died probably in 1168. He was distinguished as a philosopher, astronomer, physician, and poet, but especially as a grammarian and commentator. About 1140, he left Spain for Rome, resided afterwards at Mantua, in Italy, in 1146, at Rhodes in 1155 and 1165, and visited England in 1155.

Browning had made no study of Rabbi Ben Ezra's writings: he knew him only by name, and he used the name as a cover for the expression of his own philosophy of life in a semi-oriental garb.

The following analysis of the poem is taken from Dr. Berdoo's *Browning Cyclopædia* (pp. 373—374):—

"Man's life is to be viewed as a whole, God's plan in our creation has arranged for youth and age, and no view of life is consistent with it which ignores the work of either. Man is not a bird or a beast, to find joy solely in feasting; care and doubt are the life stimuli of his soul; the Divine Spark within us is nearer to God than are the recipients of His inferior gifts. So our rebuffs, our stings to urge us on, our strivings, are the measure of our ultimate success: aspiration, not achievement, divides us from the brute. The body is intended to subserve the highest aims of the soul. it

will do so if we live and learn. The flesh is pleasant, and can help soul as that helps the body. Youth must seek its heritage in age; in the repose of age he is to take measures for his last adventure. This he can do with prospect of success proportionate to his use of the past. Wait death without fear, as you awaited age. Sentence will not be passed on mere "work" done; our purposes, thoughts, fancies, all that the coarse methods of human estimate failed to appreciate, these will be put in the diamond scales of God and credited to us. God is the Potter; we are clay, receiving our shape and form and ornament by every turn of the wheel and faintest touch of the master's hand. The uses of a cup are not estimated by its foot or by its stem; but by the bowl which presses the Master's lips to slake the Divine thirst. We cannot see the meaning of the wheel and the touches of the potter's hand and instrument; we know this and this only,—our times are in His hand who has planned a perfect cup."

Another excellent analysis of the Poem will be found in Mrs. Oir's *Handbook to Browning's Works*, from which the following extract will prove useful as an introduction to the philosophy of *Rabbi Ben Ezra* :—

"The most striking feature of the philosophy of *Rabbi Ben Ezra* is the poet's estimate of age. According to him the soul is eternal, but it completes the first stage of its experience in the earthly life; and the climax of the earthly life is attained, not in the middle of it, but at its close. Age is therefore a period, not only of rest, but of fruition.

"Spiritual conflict is appropriate to youth. It is well that youth should sigh for the impossible, and, if need be, blunder in the endeavour to improve what is. He would be a brute whose body could keep pace with his soul. The highest test of man's bodily powers is the distance to which they can project the soul on the way which it must travel alone.

"But life in the flesh is good, showering gifts alike on

sense and brain. It is right that at some period of its existence man's heart should beat in unison with it; that having seen God's power in the scheme of creation, he should also see the perfectness of His love, that he should thank Him for his manhood, for the power conferred on him to live and learn. And this boon must be granted by age, which gathers in the inheritance of youth.

“ The inheritance is not one of earthly wisdom. Man learns to know the right and the good, but he does not learn how outwardly to apply the knowledge, for human judgments are formed to differ, and there is no one who can arbitrate between them. Man's failure or success must be sought in the unseen life—not in that which he has done, but in that which he has aspired to do.

“ Nothing dies or changes which has truly *been*. The flight of time is but the spinning of the potter's wheel to which we are as clay. This fleeting circumstance is but the machinery which stamps the soul (that vessel moulded for the Great Master's hand). And its latest impress is the best: though the base of the cup be adorned with laughing loves, while skull-like images constitute its rim.”

### Notes

#### 1.

1. Grow old along with me—*i.e.*, there is no fear in growing old; old age is not an age for any one to be afraid of.

*N B*—The phrase “along with me” is intended to suggest that the writer himself is an old man, whose verdict should therefore be accepted without hesitation.

2 The best—*i.e.*, the best part of life.

Yet to be—still to come.

3. The last of life—the latest period of life—namely, old age

The first—the first period of life—namely, youth

For which the first was made—*i.e.*, the period of youth serves as a preparation for old age.

## 4. Our times—our lives.

Our times are in His hand—our lives are ordered or planned by God. This is a quotation from the Bible, *Psalms XXXI* 14.

5. A whole I planned—I designed man's life as a thing complete in every part.

6. See all—view life in its entirety.

Nor be afraid—and do not fear the approach of old age.

**Explanation :** Stanza 1.—There is no fear in growing old : old age is not an age to be feared ; it is indeed the best part of man's life, youth being merely a preparation for it. Our lives are ordered or planned by God who designed the life of a human being as a thing complete in every part, so that if you regard youth alone, your view is incomplete. Youth presents only one aspect of life. Put your faith in God ; do not suspect God has planned anything wrong. View life in its entirety, and do not be afraid of the approach of old age.

## 2.

1. Not that—it is not that ; the reason why youth is not the best part of life is not that.

Amassing flowers—'Flowers' here represents 'the good things, the pleasures of life.'

2. Sighed—the sigh is caused by the difficulty experienced in choosing its objects of pursuit—a sigh of dissatisfaction.

Which rose—which kind of pleasure. 'Which' here denotes selection from among a number of similar objects.

Make ours—shall I taste ?

Lily—'Lily' and 'rose' represent here different kinds of pleasure all of which appear to the young man as tempting objects of pursuit. But he is bewildered by the large field of selection. Leave—leave out ; reject

As best—as something that would do equally well.

Recall—desire to have once more.

4. Stars—‘Stars’ here represents ‘ideals.’

5. Yearned—expressed its longing.

Nor—nor—neither—nor.

Jove, Mars—both names of bright stars. Jove probably represents the ideal of happiness, Mars, the ideal of heroism.

6. Mine be—let my ideal be.

Figured flame—an imaginary star.

Blends—unites the splendour of. Transcends—excels.

Explanation: Stanza 2.—Youth is very fickle. In the course of his experience a young man comes across various kinds of pleasure, all of which appear very tempting in his eyes. But he is bewildered by the large field of selection, so that he is unable to decide which of them to pursue and which of them to let go. He first pursues one, then gives it up, and the next moment goes back to it, thinking it to be as good as the others. But it is not for this fickleness that I disparage youth. Nor do I blame it for entertaining an impossible ideal. For every young man, in his ambition, longs to attain an ideal that would be better, more brilliant than any cherished by ordinary men, such as the ideal of happiness or the ideal of heroism.

### 3.

1. Such—i.e., fickle. Hopes and fears—hopes of good, fears of evil.

2. Annulling—wasting.

Brief years—short period.

3. Remonstrate—protest against; object to.

Folly wide the mark—that would be the height of folly; mere reckless folly.

4. Prize—value. He values such doubts because they show a spirit of divine discontent.

5. Low kinds exist without—which lower orders of being lack.

N. B.—Supply the relative ‘which’ before this line

6. **Finished and finite clods**—*i e.*, people who are human beings in every way. 'Clods' has reference to the fact that man is made of earth. 'Finite' refers to the fact that his faculties are limited. 'Finished' literally means 'well-made,' and compares such men to manufactured articles.

**Untroubled by a spark**—who have never known what doubt is—because their nature is too self-satisfied to entertain anything which might rouse them from their dogmatic slumber.

**Explanation : Stanza 3.**—I do not blame young men for being given to fickle hopes and fears, which merely serve to waste their short life. No, that would be the height of folly. On the contrary, I attach much value to doubt,—a quality which vulgar people do not show, people who are otherwise fair specimens of humanity, only that their nature is too self-satisfied to make them feel the need of a higher order of things.

## 4.

4. **Poor vaunt**—idle boast.

2. **Formed**—created. Were man but formed to feed—  
if happiness were the end of life.

3. **To solely seek**—to give himself up exclusively to the pursuit of pleasure. **Feast**—enjoy pleasure.

4. **Such feasting ended**—as soon as his desire for pleasure is satisfied

5. **As sure an end to men**—there would be an end to life,—life would cease to be of any further interest to him.

6. **Irks care**—does care irk or trouble?

**Crop-full**—who has had a full meal; who is not hungry. 'Crop' here means the 'stomach of a bird.'

**Frets doubt**—does doubt trouble?

**Maw-crammed**—whose stomach is filled with food. 'Maw' is an old word meaning 'stomach.' 'Crammed' literally means 'stuffed.'

**Explanation : Stanza 4.**—Human life would be only an idle boast if pleasure were supposed to be the end of life, if man were created only to give himself up exclusively to the pursuit of pleasure ; for if this were so, there would be an end to life as soon as there would be an end to 'pleasure.' Man is not a bird or a beast to find satisfaction solely in feasting : care and doubt are the life-stimuli of his soul, and they also serve to distinguish man from the brute creation. In the case of birds and beasts, the only care they have is that for food ; as soon as their hunger is satisfied, they have no desires left. But man is actuated by desires higher than merely the satisfaction of his bodily appetites.

## 5.

1. Rejoice—let us feel happy that.

Are allied to—partake of the nature of.

2. That which doth provide—i.e., God who bestows gifts.

3. And not partake—and not His creatures who share those gifts.

Effect and not receive—He who *gives*, and not those who *take* ; i.e., the Creator and not His creatures.

4. A spark disturbs our clod—one spiritual doubt is enough to put into commotion our whole body.

5. Nearer we hold of God—mankind are more closely related to God. The word 'hold' seems to have been used here in a feudal sense.

6. Who gives—a paraphrase of " which doth provide " (1. 2 above).

His tribes—God's creatures.

That take—who accept or receive God's gifts.

I must believe—i.e., this is a faith that I cannot shake



**Explanation : Stanza 5.**—We ought to feel happy that we are more akin to God, the Creator and the Dispenser of gifts, than to His creatures, who only receive those gifts and share them among themselves. One single spiritual doubt is enough to put into commotion our whole body. Man is made of dust, same as animals, but he differs from animals in that he has a soul of divine origin, which animals have not. We are more closely related to God, the giver of gifts, than to His creatures who receive those gifts.

## 6.

1. Then—since this is so,—since we partake of the Divine nature.

Rebuff—repulse ; defeat , check or disappointment.

2. Turns earth's smoothness rough—disturbs the even course of our earthly life.

*Note* —As examples of "rebuffs" that 'turn earth's smoothness rough' the poet himself enumerates (1) each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go, (2) 'pain,' (3) 'striving,' (4) 'pang,' (5) 'throe.'

3 Sting—i e., a pang of pain or disappointment.

Bids nor sit nor stand but go—does not allow us to remain inactive, but compels us to act.

4. Be—i e., let them be.

Three-parts pain—alloyed with pain to the extent of three-fourths or 75 per cent. He means that human joys are not unmixed pleasures—they are mostly made up of pain. But that does not matter—let it be so.

5. Strive—persevere in your endeavours.

Hold cheap—i.e., do not care for ; consider is as something trifling.

The strain—the amount of exertion needed.

6. Learn—gather knowledge. Account—care for ; mind.

The pang—the pain and difficulty involved in the pursuit of knowledge.

**Dare**—venture boldly. **Grudge the throe**—show any reluctance to bear pain.

**Explanation : Stanza 6.**—Since we partake of the nature of the Divine Being, let us welcome every obstacle, every difficulty that disturbs the even course of our lives. Let us likewise welcome each pang of pain or disappointment that prompts us to action, that will not allow us to rest, but compels us to act. It does not matter if our pleasures contain a large admixture of pain. Let us endeavour after perfection without caring for the amount of exertion needed. Let us gather knowledge, without minding the pain and difficulty involved in the pursuit. Let us venture boldly, never showing any reluctance to bear pain.

## 7.

1. **For**—this word introduces the reason who we should, as advised in the preceding stanza, ‘strive,’ and ‘learn,’ and ‘dare’

‘Thence—by these means, *viz.*, by striving, by daring, &c.

**Paradox**—a statement that contains an apparent contradiction. This paradox is, ‘Life shall *succeed* in what it seems to *fail*.’

2. **Comforts**—consoles us. **Mocks**—seems to deceive us.

3. **Shall life succeed.....fail**—our failures are the measure of our ultimate success in life.

*N. B.*—‘That’ should be really a compound relative ‘what’—‘succeed in that in which it seems to fail’

4 **What I aspired to be and was not**—the very failure to realise my ideal.

5. **Comforts me**—because it convinces me of my superiority to the brute.

6. **Sink**—occupy a low place.

**The scale**—the scale or order of created beings.

**Explanation : Stanza 7.**—For by these means our very failure will serve as the measure of our ultimate success

in life—though this is, of course, a paradox, which while it seems to deceive us, contains a truth which serves also to console us in our disappointment, because it convinces us of our superiority to the brute. Without such an ideal I might have been only a brute, and it was because I was not willing to be reduced so low in the order of created beings, that I cherished such an ideal.

## 8.

1. He—that man—*viz.*, “whose flesh hath soul to suit.”

2. Flesh—body.

To suit—to match; corresponding to the body.

Whose flesh hath soul to suit—who has a soul just adapted to the needs of the body, and no more.

3. Spirit—soul.

Whose spirit works.....play—whose soul only provides him with motives for bodily exertion, and nothing else.

4. Propose this test—*i.e.*, judge his real worth by this standard.

5. At its best—in a perfectly sound state.

6. Project—throw forward; advance. Lone—solitary.

How far can that.....way?—what high ideals can we under these circumstances entertain?

*N. B.*—The soul's way is called ‘lone’ or lonely, because the body does not accompany the soul after death

**Explanation :** Stanza 8.—That man is no better than a beast who has a soul just adapted to the needs of the body, only providing him with motives for bodily exertion and nothing more. The supreme criterion of humanity is, whether the bodily organs in their healthiest state, assist or retard the highest spiritual aspirations of man, and not how far they can supply his merely physical needs.

## 9.

1. Gifts—bodily faculties; physical endowments.

Should prove their use—must serve some useful purpose ; were not given to us in vain.

2. Own—acknowledge ; admit.

The Past—my own past life ; my youth.

Profuse of—full of ; stored with.

3. Power—*i.e.*, proofs of God's power.

Each side—everywhere.

Perfection—*i.e.*, evidences of God's infallible design.

Every turn—on all sides.

4. Eyes, ears—*i.e.*, the senses.

Took in their dole—brought their own share of knowledge.

*N B*—‘Dole’ is a noun formed from the verb *to deal*, meaning ‘portion dealt out’

5. Treasured up the whole—acted as a repository of all the knowledge conveyed to it by the senses.

6. Beat once—exclaim in joy.

Explanation : Stanza 9.—Though the body itself is of no value, yet bodily gifts serve a useful purpose, and in this respect I admit that my past life was full of evidences of God's power which I found everywhere, and of God's perfection, which I witnessed all around me. The bodily senses each brought in their due share of knowledge, and the brain acted as a repository of all the knowledge conveyed to it by the senses. It is only right therefore that at some period of its existence the heart should also beat in unison with the senses, and thank God for having endowed man with life and for the power conferred on him to acquire knowledge.

# 10.

1. Not once beat—elliptical for ‘Should not the heart once beat?’ Thine—‘to thee.’

2. The whole design—God's entire purpose.

3. Saw Power—obtained proof of God's power in my youth, *viz.*, through the senses, or in knowledge. Now—*i.e.*, in old age.

Love perfect—the perfection of God's love, *viz.*, through the heart or emotions.

4. Thy plan—God's design.

6. Maker—O Creator Parse as vocative case.

Remake—make me anew.

Complete—finish thy design ; a verb.

I trust what thou wilt do—I have faith that whatever thou dost will be for our good

Explanation: Stanza 10.—It is only meet and proper that the heart should exclaim, "Praise be to God! I now see God's purpose in its entirety. In my youth I saw proofs of God's *power* through knowledge; now in my old age I see the perfection of God's *love* through the emotions. Truly Thy design, O God, is a perfect one. I thank Thee for having made me a man; make me anew so as to make me perfect: for I believe that whatever thou dost will be for our good."

# 11.

1. This flesh—our bodily life.

2. Rose-mesh—a net made of roses; hence, 'bodily bondage.' The 'roses' alludes to the sweet attractions of life—the 'mesh' alludes to the theory that the soul lives in the world in a state of bondage or confinement.

Our soul in its rose-mesh—our soul while it lives in confinement in the body.

3. Pulled over to—dragged down to.

The earth—*i.e.*, low worldly objects.

Still—always Yearns for rest—longs for peace.

4. Would—I wish that.

Some prize—some valuable gift; some bodily faculty of a high order.

Hold—come to possess.

5. To match—to correspond with. Manifold—numerous.

6. Possessions—i.e., instincts.

Gain most—win the best reward.

As we did best—considering that we were better than all other animals in our work.

Explanation : Stanza 11.—The body affords pleasures of its own, though the soul dwelling in the body considers itself a prisoner and constantly longs for the peace of heaven, being dragged down to low worldly objects. Would that man were to possess some supremely valuable faculty, which would be an equivalent for the numerous instincts of the lower animals, as a reward for his doing better work than all other animals !

## 12.

2. Spite of—in spite of. This flesh—our bodily nature.

3. Strove—endeavoured—to elevate myself.

Made head—advanced ; made progress.

Gained ground—achieved success.

4. Wings—flies.

6. Nor soul helps....soul—the body can now help the soul in the same degree as formerly the soul helped the body. The soul helped the body formerly in acquiring knowledge and power ; the body can now help the soul in attaining spiritual perfection.

Explanation : Stanza 12.—We should not always regard the body as a mere hindrance to the soul. There is really no antagonism between body and soul. Our endeavours after good, our success in making progress, our advancement on the path of perfection are not achieved in despite of the body, but with the body as the co-partner and fellow-worker of the soul. Let us, like birds singing as they fly, thank God, saying, “All good things have been created for

our enjoyment. The body can now, in old age, help the soul in the same degree in which the soul in youth helped the body."

## 13.

1. Summon—call upon.

2. Youth's heritage—the reward earned by youth's activities and acquisitions.

3. So far—this may mean either (1) so far as the earthly life is concerned; or (2) so far as the period of youth goes. The latter sense is preferable. Term—close.

4. Thence—after this life; or, at the close of youth.

Approved a man—a perfect type of man.

5. For ay removed—for ever different.

6. Developed brute—a higher species of animal.

In the germ—in an immature state; in embryo.

Explanation: Stanza 13.—Hence I call upon old age to grant the reward earned by youth's activities and acquisitions. The close of youth marks the close of at least one period of struggle in man's life. By reason of those very struggles I shall be regarded as a man of approved type, a true man, a man eternally different from a higher species of animal, a man who is a God in embryo.

## 14.

1. Thereupon—at the close of my youth,—i.e., in old age, which is thus a period of rest between two struggles,—the struggles of youth and the struggles of the next world.

2. Ere I be gone—before I set out.

3. My adventure brave and new—i.e., the fresh struggles of my later life.

4. Fearless—intrepid. Unperplexed—calm.

5. When I wage battle next—when I carry on those fresh struggles.

6. Weapons—armour—offensive and defensive arms.  
Indue—put on.

Explanation: Stanza 14.—At the close of my youth I shall take rest, before entering upon the fresh struggles of my later life. For shortly after that I shall have to proceed towards the next world, where I shall have to carry on fresh struggles with fresh courage and coolness; so that in my old age I should prepare myself for this new struggle.

## 15.

1. Youth ended—youth *being* ended. 'Youth' is 'here a nominative absolute. Try—test; determine.'

2. My gain or loss—whether I have been a gainer or a loser.

3. Be the fire ashes—it does not matter if with the loss of youth I come to lose the heated activities, the strong passions, of youth.

What survives is gold—the result of those hot struggles of youth will be that our character will become more refined, in the same way as gold becomes pure by smelting.

4. Weigh the same—estimate the value of the result.

5. Its praise or blame—*so*, according as the result has been some gain or loss.

6. Young—while young; during youth.

All lay in dispute—I could not properly calculate the gain or loss.

I shall know being old—in old age I shall find out the truth.

Explanation: Stanza 15.—When my youth is over, I shall try to determine whether I have reaped a gain or suffered a loss from the struggles of youth. It does not matter if with the loss of youth I come to lose the heated activities, the strong passions of youth, for the result of these will be that my character will become more refined, in the



same way as gold becomes pure by smelting. And then I shall appraise the value of the effect on my character, and call my life good if the effect is found to be favourable, and bad, if it is found to be otherwise. While I was young I could not correctly calculate this ; but in my old age I shall be able to do so.

## 16.

1. Note—observe. Shuts—closes ; sets in.
2. Cuts the deed off—puts an end to the process.
3. The glory—the glory of the starry heavens.  
The grey—the dim twilight.
4. A whisper—a mysterious voice.

The west—the western horizon where the sun sets.

5. Shoots—proceeds ; says.

Add this to the rest—i.e., this day is now part of your past life.

6. Try its worth—find out its value.

Explanation : Stanza 16.—For observe that when evening sets in, a single minute puts an end to the day, and the dim twilight is succeeded by the glow of the starry firmament. A mysterious voice then seems to proceed from the west, saying, “ Here is another day gone, another day that now forms part of your past life. — It is for you to judge whether it has been productive of good or not.”

## 17.

1. So—in this way, viz., by calculating the net result of each day's activities. Within this life—even during the continuance of our earthly life.

2 Lifted over its strife—i.e., even though my life may not be a life of struggle.

3. Discern—examine my past life.

**Compare**—compare my actions with one another to judge whether they were right or wrong.

**Pronounce**—pass judgments of right and wrong

4 This rage—that fit of anger into which I fell on a particular occasion ; that angry protest against wrong.

In the main—on the whole.

5 That acquiescence—that tacit consent which I was forced to give to such and such action ; that tame acceptance of wrong.

Vain—fruitless.

6. Face—boldly meet. Proved—had experience of.

**Explanation : Stanza 17.**—In this way, before my life comes to a close, let me daily review my past life, compare my actions with one another and judge whether they were right or wrong. Let me examine individual acts thus :—  
“ That angry protest against wrong which I made on such and such an occasion was right. That tacit consent I gave to such and such an act was wrong. Now since I have had experience of the past I am better prepared to meet the future.”

## 18.

1. Reserved—given ; vouchsafed.

2. Nerved—braced ; equipped.

3. To act to-morrow.....to-day—to apply the lessons he learns from day to day to his future conduct.

4 Here—in the present life

Work enough—*i e*, all he can do is.

5. The master—God. Catch—pick up.

6 Hints of the proper craft—directions as to the right method of doing a particular kind of work

Tricks—secrets. True play—right use

*N B*—God is compared here to a master craftsman, and His directing the affairs of the world, to turning out articles of a particular

handicraft Men are compared to apprentices, whose sole occupation is first to pick up a knowledge of the craft by watching the master's method of doing his work

**Explanation: Stanza 18.**—For man's faculties here in life are limited, just strong enough to enable him to apply the lessons and experiences he gathers from day to day to the future. Hence the only thing he can do is to study the ways of God with man, and draw what lessons he can to direct his own life accordingly.

## 19.

1. Youth should strive—that youth should be a period devoted to endeavours after perfection.

2. Acts uncouth—wild acts. The reference is to the follies and intemperances of youth.

3. Toward making—after perfection.

Repose on—depend upon.

Aught found made—dogmas ready-made for him by others.

4. Age—old age. Exempt—free.

5. Know—i.e., be characterised by wisdom.

Tempt—take part in enterprises.

**Explanation: Stanza 19.**—Just as it is better for a young man to endeavour after perfection through the medium of foolish and intemperate actions, than depend upon others to make him perfect, in the same way it is better for an old man, who is free from struggles, to show wisdom than to take part in fresh enterprises. And since in youth you calmly awaited the approach of old age, so in old age, you should fearlessly wait for the approach of death.

## 20.

1. Enough—it is sufficient.

Now—for the present.

3. Be named here—i.e., are known in life.

As thou callest thy hand thine own—*i.e.*, with certainty.

4. With knowledge absolute—*i.e.*, positively.

*N. B.*—These three words form an adverbial phrase modifying the verb 'be named'

5. Subject to no dispute—open to no criticism.

That crowded youth—who formed thy companions in youth.

Nor let thee feel alone—*i.e.*, who were thy inseparable companions.

**Explanation : Stanza 20.**—It is a sufficient achievement if in old age you come to know the Right, the Good, and the Infinite, with perfect definiteness and certainty, with the same certainty with which you can call your hand your hand. This knowledge should be so driven home into your mind as not to be shaken by the objections and criticisms of those fools who were your inseparable companions in youth and who formed quite a numerous band.

21.

1. Be—let there be.

There—*i.e.*, in the knowledge of the Right, the Good, and the Infinite.

For once and all—*i.e.*, a distinction that holds good for ever, finally.

2. Severed—distinguished.

**NOTE**—The meaning is that it is the knowledge of the Right, the Good, and the Infinite which distinguishes great minds from small—a distinction that holds good for ever.

3 Announced to each.....Past—*i.e.*, it is on this knowledge too that a man's true position in life depends: If he has known the Right, the Good, and the Infinite, he is a noble man, otherwise not, whatever his worldly rank may be.

4. The world arraigned—whom the world attacked.

5. They—the world.

My soul disdained—whom I hated.

6. Speak the truth—settle the dispute.

**Explanation : Stanza 21.**—It is the correct knowledge of the Right, the Good, and the Infinite that distinguishes the truly noble from the ignoble—a distinction that is of everlasting importance. It is on this knowledge likewise that a man's true position in life also depends. It is natural that there should be difference of opinion between me and the world at large. The question is, which of us is right. Am I right in my views as to what is Right and Good, or is the world right and I wrong? It is old age alone that can settle the dispute and give us peace of mind.

22,

1. Arbitrate—act as a judge to settle this dispute.

3. Shun—hate. Follow—i.e., desire.

Slight what I receive—scorn what I consider worthy.

4. In ears and eyes—i.e., in point of sense gifts,

5. Match me—are my equals.

Surmise—form conjectures only ; i.e., our likes and dislikes, our views and opinions are all of the nature of blind conjecture.

6. They this thing and I that—i.e., one set of people hold one view, another another.

**Explanation : Stanza 22.**—Human judgments are bound to differ. One set of people love something which I myself hate, while another hate what I desire, scorn what I consider worthy ; in such a case who is to act as judge and settle this dispute? Suppose that those other people are equal to me in point of sense organisation, then the question becomes still more difficult of solution. Man's views are at best mere conjectures. One set of people have one view, another another, and it is a puzzling question which view to accept, which reject.

## 23.

1. **Vulgar mass**—gross material heap.
2. **Called 'work'**—the term 'work' is ordinarily given only to things actually done—actions which have a visible and tangible product.

**Sentence**—moral judgment. **Pass**—be passed.

3. **Things done**—accomplished facts; completed tasks.

**Took the eye**—were good to look at; were pleasing to sight. **Had the price**—were paid for adequately.

*N B*—Man's work in life is compared here to the work done by a workman in a factory. A workman is paid for the work he does, provided the articles he makes are good to look at.

4. **From level stand**—from a standpoint no higher than that of the man who does the work.

5. **The low world**—the vulgar public.

**Laid its hand**—examined it, applied its test.

6. **Found straightway to its mind**—at once approved it. **Value**—judge the merits of. **In a trice**—quickly.

*Notes*—Here the metaphor is taken from building. A mason builds a wall, and an Engineer comes to examine it. He spreads his hand over the wall,—he does not go up to the top of the wall—finds it all right, and is able at once to say what the proper wages of the mason for constructing that wall would be. In the same way, a man does some work in life, and the general public proceed to estimate its worth. The public have no higher standard of judgment than the man who did the work, and so they find the work satisfactory, and are able to estimate its value immediately according to their accepted notions of right and wrong.

**Explanation : Stanza 23.**—It is not on things actually done and accomplished, not on that material heap of outward acts commonly called 'work' that moral judgment will be pronounced. A man's life will not be passed as good or otherwise according to the quantity of work turned out by him—work consisting in accomplished facts, or visible and tangible products of his hand, like the work done by a mason, for instance, which the engineer "passes" as satisfactory after a cursory superficial examination, from which he is at

once able to calculate the cost of it. It is not on such work which the public are able to judge quickly from their own vulgar standpoint, that man's success or failure in life depends

## 24.

1. All—everything which.

Coarse thumb and finger—i.e., rough methods of estimate.

2 To plumb—to judge, to measure. The metaphor of the wall is continued. The mode of examining a wall is by means of a plumb-line (Hindustani, *Sahul*), which enables us to see whether the wall is perpendicular or not.

3. So passed—and hence left out. Making up the main account—forming a total estimate of the man's character and life.

4. Instincts—natural propensities.

Immature—not yet fully developed.

5. Purposes unsure—resolutions not fully determined upon.

6. Weighed not—could not be judged.

Swelled the man's account—were placed to his credit in forming an estimate of his life. The metaphor is taken from casting up an account, in which items are placed on the debit or credit side, according as they are to be deducted from, or added to, the man's dues.

Explanation: Stanza 24.—In forming an estimate of a man's character and life, we have to take into account not only his actual outturn of work, but also everything else which the rough methods of estimate prevalent among men are unable to calculate. These too have to be taken into consideration before judgment is passed; for example, we have to take into account all his natural propensities, however crude and undeveloped they may be; we have also to reckon

resolutions that were not fully determined upon. These cannot, of course, be termed his "work" but still they form important items in his favour in a total estimate of his character.

## 25.

1. Hardly to be packed—which could not be compressed.

2. Narrow act—An act is called 'narrow,' because the sphere of outward action is much limited as compared with the wide field of thought, motives, intentions &c that precede an act.

3. Fancies—passing wishes.

Broke through language and escaped—which were expressed in words, but never carried out.

4. All I never could be—all aspirations which I failed to realise.

5. All men ignored in me—all those qualities which men failed to notice in my character.

6. This I was worth to God—all these would be of value in the estimate which God would form of me and my work.

Whose wheel the pitcher shaped—who made me, who was my Creator. God is compared here to a potter and men to earthen pitchers.

Explanation : Stanza 25.—God, my Creator, would form a different estimate of me and my work : He would take into account not only my deeds but also my thoughts, even those thoughts that were too indefinite to lead to action. He would also take into account my momentary fancies which expressed themselves in a few words and then vanished ; also, those aspirations which I failed to realise, as well as those qualities which men failed to notice in my character. All these will form part of the estimate which my God will make of me and my work.



## 26.

1. Ay—yes Potter's wheel—a biblical metaphor, occurring in *Isaiah*, 64.

3. Spins fast—runs apace ; flies quickly.

Passive—helplessly dependent upon time.

Our clay—i.e., men.

*N B*—When a potter shapes an earthen pitcher, his wheel spins round and round, and the lump of clay is gradually shaped into a pitcher. The clay does not move at all—it is 'passive' only the wheel moves. The potter is God, His wheel is time, his clay is man. This means that God shapes man's character by making it dependent upon time.

4. Propound—preach. The object to 'propound' is the whole of the last line. The reference is to Omar Khayyam, who in one of his quatrains says :—

"Ah, fill the cup —what boots it to repeat  
How Time is slipping underneath our feet:  
Unborn tomorrow, and dead yesterday,  
Why fret about them if today be sweet!"

5. When the wine makes its round—i.e., during a merry feast.

6. Fleets—i.e., is of short duration.

All is change—nothing is permanent.

The Past gone—the Past is beyond your control.

Seize to-day—make the most of the present. This phrase is an English translation of the Latin phrase '*Carpe diem*.'

Explanation : Stanza 26.—Yes, the biblical metaphor comparing God to a potter and time to a revolving wheel is a beautiful one. Think of the deep significance of that metaphor, and then you will understand why time flies, so rapidly and why human beings are so helplessly dependent upon time and circumstance. Those men particularly ought to note this metaphor who listen to the preachings of epicurean fools who, when they are warm with drink, say, "Since life

is of short duration, nothing is permanent ; the Past is beyond our control, and we should therefore enjoy the present as much as we can."

27.

1. Fool !—i.e.,—those who think so are fools.

All that is at all—everything that exists.

2. Lasts ever past recall—is indestructible.

3. Stand sure—remain unchanged.

4. What entered into thee—whatever thoughts and feelings found entrance into thy mind at any time.

5. Was—existed.

Is—still exists. shall be—will exist for ever.

6. Time's wheel—the course of time.

Runs back or stops—may turn in a backward direction or may even come to a standstill ; may be reactionary or even stationary.

Potter and clay—God and the human soul.

Endure—live for ever

**Explanation : Stanza 27.**—Those who think it wise to enjoy only the present moment, deeming that to be all, are fools. For everything which has ever been in existence is indestructible, and is beyond our control. The world is full of change, but God and the human soul dwell for ever unchanged. The soul never parts with its faculties and acquisitions ; whatever thoughts and feelings ever found entrance into thy mind, form part of thy soul's permanent equipment. The course of time may turn backward or may even come to a standstill, but God and the human soul live for ever.

28.

1. He fixed thee—God ordained thy place.

Dance—i.e., constant whirl.

2. Plastic circumstance—worldly accidents which are partly in and partly out of thy control.

3 This Present—i.e., thy earthly life. Forsooth—of course. Fain arrest—gladly prolong.

4. Machinery—a set of circumstances. Parse as case in apposition with ‘dance of plastic circumstance.’

Just meant—only intended.

5 To give thy soul its bent—to mould thy character.

6. Try thee—to test thy worth.

Turn thee forth—send thee out into the next world.

Sufficiently impressed—with thy character properly formed.

Explanation : Stanza 28.—God placed you amid this constant whirl of worldly accidents that are partly in and partly out of your control. It is of course natural that you should desire to enjoy this earthly life to the utmost ; but you must also know that the circumstances in the midst of which you have been placed are only intended to mould your character, to test your worth, and to prepare your soul for the life to come.

## 29. .

1. What though—it does not matter if.

The earlier grooves—the lines or channels carved near the base of the cup.

2. Ran the laughing loves—depicted smiling loveable images.

3. Base—bottom. Pause and press—press alternately so as to draw lines.

4. Thy rim—the edge of the cup.

5. Skull-things—death-like images.

In order grim—in a horrid series.

6. Grow out—shape themselves.

Graver mood—more solemn style.

Obey—yield to

Sterner stress—greater pressure—than was required to shape the “laughing loves.”

**Explanation: Stanza 29.**—It does not matter if the beautiful smiling images, which decorated the base of the cup, do not appear near its edge. Those smiling images were made by delicate moulding tools, representing the pleasures and the gaiety of youth. Let the top of the cup, the outer edge, be decorated with death-like images, shaped with heavier tools, by greater pressure; and these images represent the seriousness and sobriety of age

30.

1 Down—downwards—towards the base of the cup.

Up—upwards—towards the rim of the cup.

2. To uses—look thou to the uses.

3. Festal board—banquet table

Lamp's flash—the glow of bright lamps inside the banquet room

Trumpet's peal—i.e., jocund music.

5 The master—God Aglow—ruddy.

6. Consummate—perfect

Heaven's consummate cup—viz., man

Earth's wheel—i.e., events of the world.

What needst thou with earth's wheel?—i.e., when the soul has already become perfect and fit to enter into the presence of God, it will have no further need of life's experiences

**Explanation: Stanza 30.**—When you contemplate your clay cup, do not look at the bottom, but at the top, the upper edge, that is, when you survey your life do not reflect over the period of youth, with its enjoyments, but rather consider whether the use to which you put your life was good or otherwise, whether your life was spent in a way fitted to

please your Maker, or not. Remember that your soul is of heavenly origin, that you are the most perfect of God's creatures, and that hence when your soul has become perfect and fit to enter the presence of God you have nothing further to do with the events of the world.

## 31.

1. Now as then—in old age, as I did in youth.
2. Thee—thy help and guidance. Moulded men—shape human destiny.
3. The whirl—the spinning of the wheel.

While the whirl was worst—during the most adverse circumstances of life.

4. Wheel of life—i.e., worldly circumstances.
  5. Shapes and colours—objects and attractions.  
Rife—full of.
  - 6 Bound dizzily—tied helplessly.
- Mistake my end—forget the purpose for which I was created  
To slake thy thirst—namely, to please God.

## 32.

1. Take—accept my life.  
Use thy work—put me to any use you like.
2. Amend—correct; rectify. Flaws—defects.  
Lurk—remain hidden.
- 3 Strain of the stuff—twisting of the material; i.e., evil or vicious tendencies of my nature.  
Warping—crookedness.  
Past the aim—which were not intended by the potter.
- 4 My times be—may my life rest.
5. As planned—according to thy plan.
6. Approve of youth—find that my youth was well-spent.

Explanation: Stanzas 31 and 32.—But though I have arrived at the last stage of life, I need thy help and

guidance, O God, in old age as much as I did in youth. And even when my circumstances in life were most adverse I never forgot the purpose for which I was created, namely, to please God with my work, although I was all along helplessly dependent upon those circumstances over which I had no control, and although I was surrounded by all manner of tempting objects in the world. Hence I pray thee, O God, accept my life and put it to whatever use thou likest. Correct whatever defect may remain hidden in me; make straight whatever is crooked or twisted, and make my soul perfect as thou designedst it to be! May I find in my old age that my youth was well-spent, and may death give the finishing-touch to the perfection of my life!

---

349.

PROSPICE.

(Page 390).

Introduction.

This poem first appeared in *Dramatis Personae* in 1864. It was written in the autumn following the death of Mrs. Browning

The poem is at once a defiance of death and a challenge to spiritual conflict. The title *Prospice* literally means 'look forward,' and aims 'at setting at naught the fear of death which makes some people slaves all their lives

Dr Beidoe has the following criticism on this poem in his *Browning Cyclopaedia* :—

"In the short '*Prospice*' is concentrated the strength of a great soul and the courage of one who is prepared for the worst, with eyes unbandaged. As an example of the poet's power nothing can be finer. The dramatic intensity of the opening line—the fog, the mist, the snow, and the blasts which indicate the journey's end, "the post of the foe"—is unsurpassed even by Shakespeare himself."

## Notes.

## 1. Fear death?—shall I fear death?

*N B*—The dash after the word 'death' is explanatory ; the six or seven lines that follow are descriptive of death

The fog—*i.e.* , a sense of suffocation.

2. The mist in my face—*i.e.*, a dim haze spreading before my eyes, blurring my vision.

3. The snows begin—*i.e.*, a cold sensation begins to overpower my limbs.

The blasts—*i.e.*, the panting and the gasping.

Denote—show.

4. I am nearing the place—that death is approaching.

5. Power—*i.e.* , intense darkness. Press—fury.

6 Post of the foe—the position occupied by the enemy  
—Death

7 He—*viz.* , the foe—Death.

The arch fear—*viz.*, Death, the most fearful of all objects

In a visible form—wearing a definite shape.

8. Yet—*i.e.* , in spite of the power of the night, the fury of the storm, &c.

Must go—must face the enemy ; must meet death.

9. The journey is done—life is over.

The summit attained—the last point of life has been reached

10. The barriers fall—the boundary-line separating life from death has disappeared

11. A battle's to fight—a great struggle has to be waged,  
—*viz.* , a struggle with death.

Guerdon—reward.

Explanations: Lines 1-12.—Why should I fear death? I am prepared for the symptoms of death, ready to bear a sense of suffocation in my throat, a dim haze spreading before my eyes, a cold sensation creeping over my limbs, and the

panting and the gasping that sets in immediately before death. The night may be intensely dark, the storm may be blowing with the greatest fury, the enemy may be stationed at a strongly-fortified post, presenting a horrid front; but in spite of all this, the strong man must face the enemy, must meet death. For his life is over, the last and highest point of his earthly existence has been reached, the boundary-line separating life from death has disappeared, though he has to wage a hot struggle with death before he can reap the fruit of his life.

13. A fighter—a man fond of fighting.

One fight more—*viz.*, with death.

14. The best—because it is to lead to the happy hereafter.

The last—because after death all struggles are at an end.

15. I would hate—I do not like.

That death bandaged my eyes—that death should not appear in a horrid form before me.

Forbore—spared me from pain.

16. Bade me creep past—told me to pass quietly beside him.

17. Taste the whole of it—experience all the pain attendant on death.

Fare—behave. Peers—equals.

18. The heroes of old—the brave warriors of ancient times.

19. The brunt—the hardest blows.

Pay glad life's arrears of pain—suffer cheerfully all the pain that may have been left over during life.

20. Darkness and cold—*i.e.*, fear and trouble.

21. Turns—changes into.

22. The black minute's at end—the terrible moment (of death) is past

23. The elements' rage—*i.e.*, the evils of life. The



“elements” refer to the old belief that human bodies were composed of four elements—earth, water, fire, and air.

Fiend-voices—shouts of devils ; i.e., the evil promptings of passions.

Rave—utter mad cries.

24. Dwindle—grow faint and mild.

Blend—become mixed together.

25 Change—sc., from pain to pleasure.

A peace—a source of calm.

26. A light—viz., the light of heaven.

Thy breast—This refers to the poet's wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

27. Soul of my soul—the dearest object of my love.

Clasp thee again—meet thee once more.

28. And with God be the rest—and for the rest I shall leave it to God.

Explanation : Lines 13—28.—I was all my life a man fond of fighting, and hence I am prepared to undertake one more fight, viz., the fight with death, which is the best and the last of struggles. I do not like that death should bandage my eyes so that I may not see his horrifying face, nor do I wish that he should spare me from pain or treat me with leniency. No ; I am prepared to experience all the pain attendant on death. I shall behave like my equals, the brave warriors of ancient times, and bear the hardest blows without flinching. I shall cheerfully suffer any balance of pain, or fear, or trouble that may be left over as my share in life. To the brave man the worst suddenly changes into the best. The terrible moment of death is past, and the loud turmoils of life, the calls of wicked passion, shall now grow fainter and fainter, then mix with one another and change their tone, first to a peaceful note, then to a note of joy. The next moment I shall behold the light of heaven, and in that light I shall see thee, my beloved wife, and embrace thee once more ; and for the rest let God do whatever He may think best.

353.

SAY NOT THE STRUGGLE NOUGHT AVAILETH.

(Page 400 )

Introduction.

This poem well reflects the attitude of a reasonable, sober, God-fearing man towards the doubts, difficulties, and dangers that beset us in life. Like Longfellow's *Psalm of Life* it is an attack on pessimistic philosophy, a trumpet-call to rouse the despondent soul into activity. Its noble teaching may be summed up in the following words :—

“ The struggle against evil is a noble struggle that is its own reward, whether it results in any manifest success or not. For we must remember that success is not always manifest, and because it is sometimes hidden or slow in coming, we should not give way to despair and sit in despondency, but carry on the struggle manfully to the end.”

Notes

1. Say not—i.e., I do not believe that ; it is a mistake to think that

Of the opening line of Longfellow's *Psalm of Life*—  
“ Tell me not in mournful numbers.”

The struggle—*sc*, against evil.

Nought availeth—is a vain struggle.

2. Labour—effort. Wounds—disappointments.

3. The enemy—*viz.*, the evil we are trying to overcome.

Faints not—is not growing less.

Faileth—is being destroyed.

4. As things have been they remain—the state of affairs remains unchanged

5. Hopes—our expectations of success. Dupes—i.e., false.

Fears—our fears of failure.

Liars—i.e., likewise false or groundless.

6. It may be—it is just possible.

Yon smoke—The struggle with evil is compared to a

battle ; the exaggerated estimate the pessimist forms of the bitterness of the struggle makes him blind to the success that may be achieved by his own comrades, just as the smoke issuing from the batteries engaged in the battle makes us fail to perceive the exact position of the parties.

7. Your comrades—your party. Chase—pursue.

The fliers—your opponents who have been defeated and are running away.

Ev'n now—at that very moment when you are desponding of success.

8. But for you—except for your faint-hearted diffidence, which leads you to think that your party has gained no success.

Possess the field—have won complete victory in the battle.

**Explanation :** Stanzas 1 and 2.—I do not believe that the struggle against evil is a fruitless endeavour, in which the effort and the disappointments all go for nothing, and the evil we try to overcome neither grows less nor is destroyed, the position remaining quite unaltered. I admit that our expectations of success sometimes prove false by reason of their being over-sanguine, but at the same time our apprehensions of failure are likewise falsified by reason of their being exaggerated. It is just possible that at the very moment when you are desponding of success, your partisans have overcome the enemy, and have won a complete victory in the struggle, although you in your faint-hearted diffidence think otherwise.

9. Tired—slow. Vainly—without making any headway. Breaking—dashing against the coast.

10. Here—immediately in front of you. No painful inch to make—to make not the least progress with all their hard toil.

11. Far back—in some part which you cannot see.

Creeks and inlets—openings in the coast. Making—advancing.

12. Silent—unperceived by you. Flooding in—advancing in huge waves. The main—the sea.

Explanation : Stanza 3.—For it is just possible that, at the time when the wave dashing against one part of the coast—the part, namely, immediately under your notice,—seem to be making no progress at all, in another part of the same coast, unseen by you, the sea-waters may be advancing in huge waves, unperceived by you. That is, it is just possible that at the moment when you seem to be attaining the smallest measure of success, or no success at all in any visible, tangible shape, a much greater measure of success may actually have been achieved by you in a different direction, of which you are hitherto ignorant.

13 By eastern windows—in expected directions.

14. When daylight comes—when the sun rises ; at sunrise . *i.e.*, when a matter is ripe for success. Comes in the light—the sun's rays are perceptible ; *i.e.*, success becomes visible.

15. In front—in the east , *i.e.*, so far as we can immediately perceive.

The sun climbs slow, how slowly—*i.e.*, the success achieved can scarcely be measured.

16. Westward—in the opposite direction, which you fail to notice. The land is bright—the sunlight has spread over the world ; *i.e.*, the amount of success gained is considerable.

Explanation : Stanza 4.—Just as eastern windows are not the only places through which the sunlight can enter a place, in the same way it is not in expected directions alone that one should look for success. Just as again at sunrise the sun is seen ascending very slowly in the east, but at the same time lightens up the whole sky even up to

the opposite extremity, in the same way it is just possible that, so far as we can immediately perceive, the amount of success achieved may be infinitesimal but may really be very considerable in directions in which we least suspected it.

---

355.

‘O MAY I JOIN THE CHOIR INVISIBLE.’

(Page 401).

Introduction.

This poem,—one of the few that George Eliot wrote—begins with a prayer that the poet may after death join the happy band of immortal angels who are believed to dwell in heaven and sing halleluiahs in the presence of God. Then it goes on to explain what “life in heaven” really means. There is no geographical heaven situated up on high: to live in heaven only means to pass life in such a way as to leave a beneficial influence behind for ever—to stimulate other people to enthusiasm for doing good to others, to encourage them to follow the right path, to hate selfishness, and to entertain noble thoughts.

Notes.

*Longum illud tempus* &c.—‘I am more troubled about that long time when I shall be no more than with this narrow present.’

1. Choir—lit. ‘a band of singers attached to a church for singing hymns’; hence ‘a band of heavenly angels dwelling in the presence of God and singing hymns to His glory.’

Invisible—because they are angels, and not bodies of flesh and blood.

2 Immortal dead—the great souls of the past whose memories will live for ever.

Live again—live as it were a second life on earth.

3. In minds made better by their presence—in the person of those whose characters they ennobled by their wholesome influence

4. Pulses stirred to generosity—i.e., people roused to enthusiasm for doing good to others

5. Deeds of daring rectitude—doing the right boldly—in defiance of consequences.

Scorn for—feeling a contempt for.

6. Miserable aims—wretched ends, low objects.

That end with self—which are purely selfish.

7. Thoughts sublime—lofty ideas.

Pierce the night like stars—i.e., of dazzling lustre and glory.

8. Mild persistence—soft unfading light.

Urge—stimulate.

Search to—endeavour after.

9. Vaster issues—nobler ideals.

Explanation: Lines 1—9.—O may I, after death, become one of the unseen band of angels who sing hymns of glory in the presence of God in heaven! May I be one of those departed worthies of the world whose memories live for ever, and who live as it were a second life on earth in the person of those whose characters they ennobled by their wholesome influence, whose hearts they roused to enthusiasm for doing good to others, whom they taught to do the right boldly, in defiance of consequences, to loathe low selfish aims, and to entertain lofty thoughts and feelings that diffuse their lustre far and wide and whose soft unfading light quietly stimulates men to endeavour after nobler ideals.

10. So—in this way—i.e., in the way described below.

11. Undying music—everlasting harmony.

12. Breathing—i.e., producing.

As beauteous—as beautiful as it is undying.

Order—good order ; system. Controls—governs.

13. Growing sway—increasing influence.

Growing—developing from high to higher.

Explanation : Lines 10—13.—Heaven is not a geographical place : to live in heaven only means to live at harmony with the world, so that the result of our lives may be to produce an orderly influence—as beautiful as it is permanent—regulating more and more the life of man as it progresses higher and higher.

14. So—in this way ; by leading this kind of life.

Inherit—come to enjoy.

Sweet purity—happy nobility of character.

15. For which—to gain which.

Struggled—fought hard ; endeavoured strenuously.

Agonized—suffered agony. The word is here used as an intransitive verb.

16. With widening retrospect—as we looked back on our past life farther and further back.

Bred despair—produced a feeling of despair in our minds as to our chance of obtaining such sweet purity.

Explanation : Lines 14—16.—It is in this way that we come to enjoy that unsullied happiness for which we endeavoured so strenuously, but which we failed to obtain at any time of our life, for which we felt so much pain as we looked back to the long years of our past life.

17. Rebellious flesh—tumultuous passions.

That would not be subdued—which are so difficult to keep under control.

18. Vicious parent—sinful father: Rebellious passions are compared to a sinful father.

Shaming—putting to shame,—because the repentance is followed by fresh acts of sin.

Still—always.

Its child—*viz.*, penitence, which is called the *child* of passion, because repentance is begotten by indulgence in passion.

19 Poor—feeble. Quick dissolved—immediately melted away.

20. Discords—tumults.

Quenched—being set at rest ; being put down.

Meeting harmonies—soothing peace.

21. Die—disappear.

Large and charitable air—atmosphere of liberality and charity.

Explanation : Lines 17—21 —Another characteristic of this “ life of heaven ” is that the disorderly passions of man, which are so difficult to keep under control, which beget repentance so often and so often break it, are immediately softened and subdued. The tumults caused by those passions are merged in soothing peace and disappear in that atmosphere of liberality and charity.

22. Our rarer, better, truer self—*i.e.*, the nobler and more sublime qualities of our character.

23. Sobbed—sighed, *i.e.*, longed.

Religiously—fervently.

Yearning song—poetry and music expressive of the soul's higher longings.

24 Watched—was anxious.

Ease the burden of the world—lighten the pressing weight of earthly cares and troubles.

25. Laboriously tracing—carefully distinguishing between.

What must be—necessary evils.



26. What may yet be better—*i.e.*, curable evils.

Within—in the inner life.

27. A worthier image for the sanctuary—a better image of God, fitter to be placed in the temple of the body. The inner life of the soul is a better representation of God, and more fit to reside in the temple of the body, than the outer life of the flesh.

28. Shaped it forth—moulded this image.

Before the multitude—before the eyes of the world.

29. Divinely human—into a shape which is at once human and divine.

Raising—elevating. So—in this manner.

*N B.*—Lines 28—30—"Saw within a worthier image *live*"—form a parenthesis. The main sentence is—"And all our rarer, better, truer self—that better self shall live till human time shall fold its eyelids, &c."

31. Shall live—*i.e.*, will continue to exercise its beneficial influence on mankind. 'Shall' here denotes prediction.

Human time—time which is of the earth; because after death the soul enters upon eternity.

32. Fold its eyelids—*i.e.*, cease to be; come to a close.

32. The human sky—what man calls the sky.

33. Gathered like a scroll—*i.e.*, folded up. A Biblical expression that occurs in the description of the Day of Judgment. See *2 Peter*, 3. 10.

34. Unread—this word is used to keep up the comparison of the sky to a scroll or book; *i.e.*, vanished.

Explanation: Lines 22—34.—A further characteristic of this "life in heaven" is that all the nobler and more sublime qualities of our character which prompted those fervent longings of our heart, such as are expressed in poetry and music, shall be immortalised. That higher nature of ours anxiously strove to lighten the pressing weight of worldly cares and troubles; it patiently bore what was inevitable

and as patiently hoped for the better in future, it saw in the inner life of the soul a fitter emblem of God than could be found in the outer life of the body; and hence it prompted us so to mould our soul as to make it appear both truly human and truly divine in the eyes of the world, and so to direct our worship of God that the worship may consist of higher reverence and of a greater admixture of love. Well, in that life of heaven, this higher nature of ours will continue to exercise its beneficial influence upon mankind for ever—until time has come to a close and the earth and the sky have ceased to exist.

35. This is life to come—the above is what is meant by the next life—life after death.

36. Martyred men—heroes of old who laid down their lives for the sake of bettering the world.

37. To follow—to follow their example.

38. Be to other souls the cup.....agony—may I be a source of help and comfort to others, in a season of pain or sorrow. 'Cup of strength' literally means 'a cup of wine that serves as a stimulant.'

40. Enkindle generous ardour—rouse enthusiasm on behalf of others.

Feed—satisfy.

41. Beget—produce; cause.

The smiles that have no cruelty—i.e., the smiles of pure joy.

42. Sweet presence of a good—a source of blessing.

Diffused—scattered over a wide area.

43. In diffusion ever more intense—becoming greater and greater as it spreads wider and wider.

44. So—if I can do all this.

Shall I join the choir invisible—I shall be deemed a member of that band of heavenly angels.

45 Whose music is the gladness of the world—whose influence is productive of happiness throughout the world.

**Explanation : Lines 35—45.**—This is what is really meant by the next life which the heroes of old have ennobled and which we ourselves aspire for. May I attain that perfect heaven myself ! May I be a source of help and comfort to others in seasons of pain and sorrow ! May I rouse enthusiasm in their hearts for the good of others ; may love for others grow greater and greater in my heart ; may I be a source of joy to others ; may my presence be a blessing scattering good over a wider and wider area and becoming greater at every step ! If I can become all this, then truly shall I be a member of that band of heavenly angels whose influence is productive of happiness throughout the world.

---

365.

SHAKESPEARE.

(Page 419.)

Introduction.

This sonnet is one of the best tributes that have ever been paid to the world-poet Shakespeare. It is also one of the finest compliments paid by one poet to another. The simile comparing Shakespeare to a lofty mountain-peak whose summit no one can ever explore, is a splendid one.

Notes.

1. Others—other poets ; meaning, inferior poets.

Abide our question—are amenable to critical study ; we can measure their worth and value.

Thou—Shakespeare.

Free—not subject to man's ordinary critical standards.

2. We ask and ask—we try to discover one thing after another in regard to Shakespeare. This refers to the researches carried on by scholars with regard to various points regarding

the personal and literary history of Shakespeare's life. The results of all such inquiries are only problematical.

**Thou smilest**—because thou knowest that such researches are vain. **Art still**—givest no reply. However deeply we may study Shakespeare's works, a great deal will still remain an insoluble mystery.

**3 Out-topping knowledge**—being higher than human knowledge can ascend to.

**4. That to the stars.....majesty**—whose majestic height seems to touch the heavens.

*N B*—‘Uncrowns’ is a word evidently coined by Matthew Arnold to mean ‘takes off the crown,’ ‘bares his head,’ and the word ‘crowns’ has been brought in to be in keeping with ‘majesty’.

**5. Steadfast footsteps**—firm basis. **In the sea**—in the depths of the sea—so that the base or foot of the hill is invisible.

**6. The Heaven of Heavens**—the highest heaven.

**7. Spares**—leaves. **Cloudy**—overspread with clouds; because clouds float near the foot of mountains they cannot ascend up to the very top.

**Border of his base**—the lower slopes of the hill.

**8. Foiled**—unsuccessful. **Searching**—exploration. **Mortality**—men. A collective noun.

**9. Who didst the stars and sunbeams know**—Shakespeare was a poet of such a high order that he held intercourse with heavenly bodies.

**10. Self-schooled**—i.e., he had received education not at a school or college, but from his own self.

**Self-scanned**—i.e., no one was fit to understand him except himself. **Self-honoured**—i.e., no one was worthy of showing him adequate respect, because no one was his equal.

**Self-secure**—i.e., unapproachable, inaccessible in thy own supremacy.

# 11. Walk on earth—live in human form.

Ungessed-at—without any one knowing even by conjecture what you really were, none of his contemporaries ever imagined how great he was.

Better so—it is better that you should remain a baffling mystery for all time.

# 12. Pains—sorrows and afflictions.

The immortal spirit—man's soul.

Must endure—is destined to suffer in life.

# 13. All weakness—all forms of human frailty.

Impairs—weakens the character of man.

Bow—overpower man.

# 14. Find their sole voice.....brow—have been given expression to by you alone, while you yourself triumphed over those ills.

**Explanation :—**Other poets are amenable to study, but Shakespeare is safe from such intrusion. We put question after question in regard to him, trying to discover one thing or other connected with him or his works, but we get no answer from him except a smile signifying that such attempts are vain. He is really higher than human knowledge can ascend to: he is something that man's intelligence is unable to comprehend. A lofty mountain whose summit seems to touch the sky, whose bases are hidden in the sea, and whose highest peak penetrates the highest heavens—in the case of such a mountain, man can explore, and that too unsuccessfully, only the lower slopes which are enveloped in clouds—both the top and the bottom being incapable of exploration. The same is the case with Shakespeare, who is a poet of such high order that he seemed to hold intercourse with heavenly bodies. What little we do know of him pertains to the lower slopes of his mind—the depths and the heights of which are alike unknown and unknowable. He had received edu-

cation nowhere, but had been instructed by his own genius : no one was fit to understand him properly, except himself ; no one was worthy of showing him adequate respect, because no one could be his equal ; he was, in a word, unapproachable, inaccessible in his own supremacy. It is true that he lived on earth in human form, but no one can ever know, even by conjecture, what he really was. After all it is better that Shakespeare should remain a baffling mystery for all time. All sorrows and afflictions that man's soul is destined to suffer in life, all forms of human frailty that make man such a weak creature, all calamities that overpower man, have been given expression to by Shakespeare, and by Shakespeare alone, who himself, however, triumphed over those ills.

---

 369.

## MORALITY.

(Page 422).

## Introduction.

This poem was first published in 1852. Its purpose is to teach us the true value and meaning of our daily routine duties. While performing those duties we sometimes gloomily feel as though they were an infliction, but when afterwards, in seasons of light, we survey the field, those same duties appear to possess a significance they never had before. If ever we feel a sense of strain, a feeling of compulsion or constraint, we ought to turn to Nature and see how her operations are carried on smoothly, spontaneously, and happily.

## Notes

1. Kindle when we will—rouse whenever we wish.
2. Fire—inspiration.
3. The spirit—the human soul.

**Bloweth**—is sometimes in a state of activity. The spirit is compared to the wind.

**Is still**—is, at other times, dull and inactive.

4. **In mystery our soul abides**—we cannot understand the secret operations of our soul, the ways of the soul are inscrutable.

5. **Tasks willed**—the resolves that we have made; the things that we have determined to do.

**Hours of insight**—moments of inspiration.

6 **Hours of gloom**—periods of mental darkness and depression, when we are in doubt about everything.

**Fulfilled**—carried out,

**Explanation : Stanza 1.**—It is not in our power to rouse or summon inspiration whenever we wish. For man's soul works by fits and starts, and its ways are inscrutable. But resolves that we may make in our moments of inspiration can be carried out during periods of mental darkness and depression.

7. **Aching hands and bleeding feet**—*i.e.*, intense labour and pain.

8. **Dig and heap**—*i.e.*, perform our daily duties. The metaphor is taken from building operations.

**Lay stone on stone**—*i.e.*, do our routine work one after another. The metaphor of the building is continued.

9. **The burden and the heat**—*i.e.*, the toil and suffering.

10. **Wish 'twere done**—wish to get rid of it.

11. **Hours of light**—*i.e.*, season of cheerfulness; lit. 'the next morning.'

12 **All we have built**—the duties that we have performed.

**Discern**—*i.e.*, perceive the true significance of.

**Explanation : Stanza 2.**—We perform our daily duties with intense labour and pain, despatching our routine work one after another ; we bear the toil and the suffering of the long day, and wish it to end as quickly as possible,—doing everything just like the daily labourer engaged in building work. But it is only when the season of cheerfulness comes back that we can find out the true significance of those laborious duties.

13. The clouds—*i.e.*, the mental gloom.

Are off the soul—has dispersed ; *i.e.*, when a fit of inspiration comes upon the soul.

14. Bask—lit. ‘ to warm oneself in the sun’s rays.’

In Nature’s eye—*i.e.*, directly in her presence.

When thou dost bask in Nature’s eye—*i.e.*, when Nature herself guides thee to what is highest, and struggles are no longer needed.

13. Ask—ask yourself. Imperative mood.

She—*viz.*, Nature. Viewed—looked upon.

Self-control—*i.e.*, the patience with which you discharged your daily duties.

16. Struggling—forced. Task’d—imposed upon as a task ; regarded as an infliction. Morality—sense of duty.

17. Free—spontaneous. Light—gay.

Air—manner ; mode of work.

**Explanation : Stanza 3.**—Then, when your mental gloom has dispersed and a fit of inspiration has come back upon your soul, and when Nature herself seems to guide you to what is highest, and struggles are no longer needed, you should ask to yourself how Nature looks upon your work, remembering that your work was considered by you as a sort of infliction, as a task imposed from without, and that Nature’s own operations are performed spontaneously, gaily,



and cheerfully—so much so that you never expected to attain those qualities in the performance of your own duties.

19. She—*viz*, Nature, here representing conscience. Censure—criticism; disapproval.

Thou dost dread—*sc.* because of the contrast between man's struggle in performing his duty and the free happy manner in which Nature does her work.

20. Whose eyes thou wert afraid to seek—whose approval you were too timid to ask for.

21. Glow—a flush of anger.

23. That strife divine—the strain and struggle that accompanies the performance of your duty. It is called 'divine' because it accompanies the performance of duty.

24. Whence was it—*i.e.*, from whom did you derive it?

For it is not mine—for surely man has not derived it from Nature.

Explanation : Stanza 4.—Nature's disapproval you fear most, you feared even to look her in the face, because of the contrast between man's struggling way of performing his duty and the quiet, spontaneous, happy ways of Nature : but how does she really look upon your work? She feels angry, and with a flush on her face she says unto you, "Ah, my child! where did you derive that strain and struggle which accompanies the performance of your duty? Surely it cannot have been derived from Nature."

26. There is no effort on my brow—*i.e.*, Nature's operations are performed spontaneously.

25. I do not strive—there is no conspicuous effort in Nature's work.

I do not weep—there is no whining, no grumbling.

27. I rush with the swift spheres—The "spheres" refers to the heavenly bodies revolving in their orbits, whose motions are guided by Nature.

372.. •

## RUGBY CHAPEL.

(Page 435.)

NOVEMBER, 1857.

## Introduction.

This poem is an elegy on the death of the poet's father, Dr. Thomas Arnold, who was for 14 years Head-master of the great public school at Rugby. He died in 1812, and the poem was written fifteen years later, and published in 1867. Dr. Arnold was buried in the school chapel, and a plain stone tablet marks the place of his grave, which is just below the chancel steps of the present enlarged building.

“ The characteristics which are chiefly dwelt upon in this poem are the combined strength and sympathy which made him the guide and support of those weaker than himself, and the steadfast determination, so far as possible, not to let those perish who were under his care.”

## Notes.

1. Coldly—because the poem was written in the month of November.

Sadly—because the autumn is a cheerless season in cold countries. Descends—sets in.

2 The autumn evening—the November evening.

The field—the Rugby School close or compound in which the Chapel stands.

3. Strewn—scattered over. Dank—damp. Because it was the autumn season.

N B —‘ Dank ’ is here a transferred epithet properly applying to the weather, and not to the drifts.

Yellow—faded. Because in the autumn season trees shed their leaves. Drifts—driving masses.

4. Elms—a kind of tall English tree,

5. Fade into dimness—are becoming invisible in the growing darkness of the evening. Apace—rapidly.

6. Silent—in the midst of silence. As the evening advances the silence becomes greater.

7. Late at their play—who keep playing in the school compound upto a late hour in the evening.

10. Solemn—because the chapel is a place of religious worship and of burial.

Unlighted—dark. Austere—severely simple.

11. Gathering darkness—growing darkness of the evening. Arise—rise to view.

12. In whose bound—within which.

13. Laid—buried.

Explanation: Lines 1—13.—The chill November evening is setting in, giving rise to solemn thoughts in the mind. The school close, scattered over with masses of pale withered leaves driven by the wind, and the elm trees standing there are both quickly vanishing from view in the darkness of the evening. There is a deep silence spreading over the place. The few boys who are left playing their games at that late hour of the evening, are silent likewise. The lamps burning inside the rooms of the boys are sending their light through the window panes to the street. But the Chapel, where my father lies buried, is looking cold, dark, and severely simple, suggesting solemn thoughts to the mind in the growing darkness of the evening.

14. Gloom—darkness.

16. To my mind brings thee back—reminds me of you.

17. In the light of thy radiant vigour—as you were in the prime of life.

19. In the gloom of November—*i.e.*, even in the dullest, most cheerless season.

20. Days not of gloom—*i.e.*, happy days.

At thy side—in thy company.

21. Seasons—the change of seasons. Impaired—weakened Ray—brightness.

22 Even—uniform ; constant.

25. Bygone autumns with thee—*i.e.*, my happy boyhood spent at home, while you were alive.

Explanation : Lines 14-25.—You lie buried in Rugby Chapel in the darkness of this November evening, when I have come to visit your grave. But alas ! the word ‘darkness’ reminds me of what you were in life—cheerful, healthy, strong. Even in the dullest, most cheerless season we spent happy days in your company ; for change of seasons never dimmed the brightness of your unvarying cheerfulness. Such a person were you ; and I, who have lost you, now stand before your grave this November evening, and remember the happy days of my past life spent with thee.

26. Gone round—elapsed.

27. Arorest—*i.e.*, prepared.

To tread.....the road of death—*i.e.*, to die. “To tread the road of death” is not used here as a hackneyed expression for the simple act of dying, but contains a reference to the circumstances attending Dr Arnold’s death. Early on the morning of the 12th of June, 1842, after Dr. Arnold had been making preparations for the journey from Rugby to Fox How at the beginning of the midsummer holidays, he was attacked by heart disease and died within a few hours.

29 A call—a summon from God.

Unforeseen—which was unexpected. Because Dr. Arnold died a somewhat premature death.

30 For fifteen years—*viz.*, the period between 1842, the date of Dr. Arnold’s death, and 1857, the date when this poem was written.

31 We—*viz.*, thy children. In thy shade rested—lived under thy care and protection.

32 As under the boughs of a mighty oak—*i.e.*, safe from all harm.

84. Sunshine and rain—good fortune and misfortune ; prosperity and adversity.

As we might—as best we could.

35. Bare—exposed. Unshaded—without protection.

Alone—separated from thee.

36. Lacking the shelter of thee—deprived of thy care and protection.

**Explanation :** Lines 26-36.—Fifteen years have passed since on that morning of the 12th of June, you died in a manner quite unexpected, at an age somewhat premature, being suddenly summoned by God. And during these fifteen years we, your children, who lived under your care and protection safe from all harm, have managed to drag on our lives as best we could—exposed to danger, without thy protection, separated from thee, and deprived of thy fatherly care

37. By what shore—in what region.

38. Tarriest—dost thou dwell

That force—that strong personality.

38. Been left vain—passed away uselessly.

*Note* —There is a striking resemblance between the thought of the above lines and the following from Tennyson's *In Memoriam* —

'So many worlds, so much to do,

So little done, such things to be,

How know I what had need of thee,

For thou wert strong, as thou wert true''

40. Somewhere—in some other world.

41. Sounding—noisy. Labour-house vast of being—lit. 'big factory of beings,' *i.e.*, the systems of worlds peopled by living creatures, all doing useful work at the bidding of God.

42. Practised—employed ; exercised.

43. Zealous—full of enthusiasm. Beneficent—productive of good. Firm—strong, unwavering.

**Explanation :** Lines 37-43 —In what region does your great spirit inhabit now ? For that strength of character

ter, that capacity which your soul possessed, cannot be entirely lost : it is assuredly being exercised in some other world, far away from us, one of those numerous worlds peopled by living creatures all busy in carrying out the will of the Creator. And, as before, your faculties must be employed enthusiastically, strongly, and in behalf of what is good.

44. Far-shining sphere—distant planet.

45. Conscious or not of the past—whether bearing recollections of your life on earth or not.

46. Performest the word—carry out the command.

47. The Spirit in whom thou dost live—God in whose presence you live now.

48. Prompt—ready. Unwearied—untiring ; indefatigable. As here—as you were on earth.

49. Upraisest—elevate.

50. The humble good—the good lying amid obscure surroundings. From the ground—*i.e.*, from degradation or neglect.

51. Sternly—strictly ; firmly. Repressest—put down ; suppress. The bad—whatever is evil.

52. Like a trumpet—*i.e.*, stirringly. Rouse—encourage.

53. Half-open eyes—imperfect knowledge. Young men are here compared to little puppies evidently.

54. Tread the border-land dim—hover doubtfully.

55. Revivest—infuse new life into.

56. Succourest—give help. Thy work—*sc.* as an educationist.

Explanation : Lines 44-57.—Yes, your soul must be residing in some distant radiant world, whether bearing recollections of your past life or not, is unknown. And there you are carrying out the commands of God, in whose presence you now live, with the same readiness, the same indefatigable energy with which you performed your duties on

earth. There too your task is enthusiastically to elevate from degradation the good that happens to be lying amid obscure surroundings. There too you firmly put down evil, encourage those who, owing to imperfect knowledge, waver doubtfully between right and wrong, and infuse new life into and give help to those who need it. Such was the character of your life on earth, and such must be the character of your life even after death.

58. Course—*i e*, general nature.

60 Eddy about—whirl round and round; *i e*, lead an aimless, unsteady life

61. Here and there—*i.e.*, unable to stick to one thing or to one place.

62. Chatter—gossip; talk in a senseless manner.

63. Gather—hoard wealth.

Squander—waste money.

Are raised aloft—rise to high positions.

64. Hurlled in the dust—reduced to abject misery.

65. Striving blindly—making hard exertions without any fixed aim.

Achieving nothing—without any good or useful result

67. Perish—*i e*, are forgotten.

69. More than he asks—*i e*, just as he does not ask.

71. Midmost Ocean—the centre of the sea.

Swelled—risen high.

Explanation : Lines 58-72.—The general nature of human life is as follows :—The majority of men lead an aimless life, spinning round and round as in a whirlpool, unable to stick to one thing or to one place. They eat and drink, talk, love and hate, hoard wealth—and waste money; they rise to high positions or are reduced to misery; they make hard exertions without any fixed aim, and fail to produce

any good or useful result. At last they die, and when they die they are forgotten by the world, no one knowing anything as to who they were or what they were, just as they do not know what waves rose up and foamed and then disappeared on the central surface of the sea in the silence of the moonlight night.

73 Thirst—ambition.

74. Ardent—strong. Unquenchable—insatiable.  
Fires—stimulates.

75. The crowd—the common herd of men.

76. Aim—some great purpose.

To go round in an eddy of purposeless dust—to spend their lives in a series of fruitless endeavours and then dying without achieving anything.

78. Effort unmeaning and vain—aimless fruitless endeavour.

80. Not without action.....fruitless—not to lead a life of inactivity.

81. Something to snatch from dull oblivion—to accomplish some deed worthy of commemoration.

82. All—entirely.

83. Glut—feed to the full.

Glut the devouring grave—i.e., allow death to make an end of them.

Explanation : Lines 73-83.—There are other men who, inspired by a strong insatiable ambition, resolve not to be reckoned with the common herd of men—not to spend their lives in a series of fruitless endeavours and then dying without having achieved anything. Yes, indeed, there are some men who try to do something great and useful, something which will save their names from utter forgetfulness, something which will prevent death from making an end of them.

84. Chosen our path—selected our course in life.



85. Path to—a course leading to.  
Clear-purposed goal—a definite end.
86. Path of advance—*i.e.*, the object of furthering the progress of the world.
87. Long—*i.e.*, it needs plenty of time.  
Steep—arduous; beset with difficulties.  
Through sunk gorges—*i.e.*, obscure places.
88. Over mountains in snow—*i.e.*, exposing oneself to the cold contempt of others.
89. With friends—in the company of friends.  
Set forth—start on our journey; pursue our plans.
90. On the height—when we have attained the hill-top; *i.e.*, when we have gained some measure of success in our enterprise.  
Comes the storm—*i.e.*, a disaster happens to us.
91. Crashes—roars loudly    Cataracts—waterfalls  
Reply—roar as it were in response to the roar of thunder.
93. Lightnings dazzle our eyes—*i.e.*, dangers overawe us.
94. Torrents—swift streams flowing through mountains.  
Breached the track—cut away the path by which we had ascended.
95. The stream-bed descends—*i.e.*, a river flows
96. Wayfarer—traveller.
97. Spray—masses of foam.
98. Boils over its borders—overspreads its banks in consequence of the rushing swiftness of the torrent.  
Aloft—high up on the mountain tops.
99. Snow-beds—accumulated masses of snow.  
Dislodge—roll down.
100. Their hanging ruin—*i.e.*, in a destructive avalanche.
101. Havoc is made—sad loss has taken place.  
Train—company.

102. Set forth at our side—started with us.
103. Falter—totter—unable to proceed any further.
104. Are left—survive.
105. With frowning foreheads—with angry looks.
106. Sternly compressed—pressed together firmly, as a sign of our unyielding courage and resolution..
- Strain on—toil on ; continue our journey.
108. Come to the end of our way—reach our destination.
109. Mid the rocks—among the mountains.
110. Gaunt—lean and haggard—through old age.
- Taciturn—silent.
- Host—inn-keeper ; probably, Time.
111. Stands on the threshold—stands at the door, ready to welcome us.
112. Thin—sparse.
113. Holds—raises up. Scan—examine ; look closely on.
114. Storm-beat—weather-beaten.
115. Whom in our party we bring—what people have come with us.

**Explanation :** Lines 84—116.—As for ourselves, we have settled our course in life ; we have chosen a road leading to a definite end, and this end is furthering the progress of mankind. But such an ideal needs plenty of time and is a very arduous one ; it is an object the fulfilment of which needs our working in quiet and in obscurity, and being exposed to imminent peril. When we start on our course we begin our work cheerfully, in the company of friends ; but just as we have attained a certain measure of success, disasters begin to crowd upon our path. We are subjected to loud hostile criticism by different sections of men ; dangers overawe us ; all retreat is cut off ; the means which enabled us to gain success before are taken away from

our power. The dangers begin to grow more serious and threaten us with destruction. Our very companions begin to desert us one by one, until we are left alone. Still we persevere in our resolve as doggedly as we can, and when we think we have attained the goal of our endeavours, we find ourselves severely alone, in a desolate region; and when we are face to face with God and have to give a reckoning of our lives, we are asked what men we have benefited by our endeavours and what people have suffered by them.

117. We bring only ourselves—we are alone.

118 We lost sight of the rest—the others disappeared.

120. Hardly—with great difficulty.

Fought through—struggled our way onwards.

121. Stripped—naked

122. Train—followers.

123 Avalanche—a mass of snow rolling down the slopes of a mountain.

Explanation: Lines 117—123 —We are of course very sorry to reply—"We are alone: the others disappeared in the storm. It was with the greatest difficulty that we ourselves struggled on, with our companions, even our clothes, all gone. The avalanche has crushed our friends and companions and swept away our bag and baggage"

124 Alone—This word is italicised both in this line and in the next in order to suggest that Dr. Arnold's life was devoted to the good of others—unselfish, disinterested, as all true educational work always is.

126 Conquer—overcome difficulties.

Come to thy goal—attain thy object.

127 Leaving the rest in the wild—allowing others to perish in the struggle.

129 Fearful—full of fear; frightened.

Our march—our course through life.

130. Fain—glad.

131. Turnedst —sc, to look back to those that were following.

132 Beckonedst—made signs of encouragement.

Trembler—the timid wayfarer.

133 Gavest the weary thy hand—helped those who were tired.

134. Paths of the world—duties of life.

135 Stones might have wounded thy feet—i.e., you met with difficulty and pain.

136. Tried thy spirit—tested thy endurance.

Of that we saw nothing—i.e., your face was ever cheerful—you never allowed signs of sorrow or trouble to appear in your looks.

140. To thee it was given—it was your mission.

142 At the end of thy day—at the close of thy life.

143. Shepherd—a biblical term standing for the pastor of a congregation or any other good-leader of men.

144. Thy sheep—i.e., the people in your charge, viz., the boys of your school.

Bringing in thy hand—i.e., leading.

Explanation: Lines 124—144.—But my father, you would never consent to be selfish even in the matter of salvation; all your life you were devoted to the good of others. You refused to overcome your difficulties alone or to win your object alone, allowing others to perish in the struggle. We who were under your guidance often gave way to fatigue, or shrank with fear, and sometimes to such an extent that we were on the point of falling down dead. But you always looked back towards us with encouragement, made signs to us to advance boldly without yielding to fear, and helped those who were tired by leading them onward. If in the course of your life you met with difficulty and pain, or had to bear hard exertion or had your mind depressed

by melancholy, you never allowed these feelings to express themselves in your looks. We saw you always cheerful, ready to assist others, and strong and unwavering in your endeavours. Hence it was your mission to be the source of salvation to many others besides yourself. And when your life came to a close, it was your happy lot, O divine guide, to lead those in your charge to bliss.

145 Through thee—i.e., by studying your character.

146. The noble and great who are gone—the heroes of old.

148. Who—refers to the heroes of old.

Else—had it not been for the fact that I have seen one like them in my own age—namely, yourself.

149 Such—i.e., so wicked

Soulless—brutish Poor—contemptible.

100 Race of men whom I see—people of the present generation.

151 Dream of the heart—an ideal, belonging to the world of fiction, not the real world.

152. A cry of desire—a mere aspiration or longing of the heart.

155. Men of the crowd—the common herd

156. To-day—at the present day.

157. Bluster—act with a great show of activity.

Cringe—act in a mean manner.

158. Hideous—most ugly.

Arid—barren.

Vile—mean ; contemptible.

159. Tempered with fire—endowed with spiritual strength and energy.

160. Fervent—earnest.

161. Helpers and friends of mankind—philanthropic.

**Explanation: Lines 145—161.**—And since I came to know your character I have begun to entertain a stronger belief in the existence of the heroes of old—those noble characters, free from stain, respected by their contemporaries and regarded as benefactors by the people of the past. For had it not been for the fact that I have seen one like those heroes in my own age, I should never have believed them to be real men—I should have deemed them only mental idealizations or embodiments in living form of the noble aspirations of the human heart; because the men whom I see around me in the present age are so brutish, so contemptible in character that I could never imagine that such heroic characters really existed at any time. But now I do believe that men like you did exist in former times, men utterly different from the common run of men of the present day, who spend their life either in feverish activity or in low servile deeds, and make life so ugly, so devoid of love, and so contemptible. I do now believe that there were men in the past who, like yourself, were full of earnestness, full of nobility and goodness, full of philanthropic zeal.

162. Servants of God—refers to the heroes of old.

163. Or sons shall I call you?—or will it be more appropriate to call these heroes the sons of God?

164. Not as servants—more intimately than mere servants ever can know their master's mind.

165. Your Father—i.e., God.

Innermost mind—real wishes of the heart.

166. Unwillingly sees—i.e., is pained to see.

167. Little ones—i.e., creatures.

Lost—i.e., cut off from the chance of salvation; straying on to the wrong path.

168. Yours is the praise—the credit is due to you.

169. In its march—in the course of its life on earth.

170. Fainted—become exhausted by the struggle.

Fallen—dropped down through fatigue.

Died—perished miserably.

**Explanation : Lines 162-170.**—These heroes of antiquity were truly the ministers of God, or perhaps it would be more appropriate to call them sons of God, for they had a more intimate knowledge of the real wishes of God than mere servants can have. And these wishes are that all His creatures should be saved, and if any happens to stray on the wrong path, He feels exceedingly sorry. If the race of man has yet continued to go on through life without faltering, without falling, without perishing, the entire credit for this is due to these heroes of antiquity.

171 In the rocks of the world—through the difficulties of life.

172. Host of mankind—the race of men,—compared here to an army.

173. Wavering—infirm.

174. Where are they tending—to what goal or end are they moving? A God—*i.e.*, God Himself.

175. Marshalled them—arranged them in marching order. Their goal—an end in life.

176. The way is so long—the pursuit of the end is such a tedious task.

177. In the wild—wandering in the wilderness, *i.e.*, involved in difficulties and dangers.

178. Sore—severe. Plagues—torments.

The rocks—*i.e.*, obstacles.

179. Rising all round—that beset them.

Overawe—fill them with fear.

180. Factions—party spirit. Divide them—cause a split among them. Their host—their company.

181 Threatens to break—is in danger of disbanding.

To dissolve—to melt away;

183. Else—otherwise ; if they are not kept united.

Myriads—countless numbers.

Fill that army—compose that host.

184. Arrive—reach the goal.

185. Sole—singly. Stray—wander away from the right path. In the rocks—among the difficulties and dangers of life.

187. Waste—wilderness.

Explanation : Lines 171-187.—See how the race of men carry on struggles all through life, fighting against difficulties and dangers, with little strength, and plenty of doubt and dread. What is the goal to which men are moving ? What is the end of human life ? It is God who has created men and given them an end in life. Yes ; but the pursuit of that end is such a tedious task. Then, they have to waste a great portion of their lives in fighting against danger and difficulty. They are exhausted by their toils, they are terrified by the difficulties that surround them. They are split into parties, and their band is every moment in danger of disbanding and di-appearing. O heroic souls ! keep them united, for otherwise of the countless numbers that compose the human species, not a single individual will be able to reach the goal, they will singly wander away from the right path, and keep struggling for ever against difficulties and ultimately perish in the attempt, without fulfilling anything.

188 In such hour of need—when men need your help so much.

189. Fainting—weak. Dispirited—timid. Race—men.

190. Like angels—as divine guides.

191. Radiant—glowing. Ardour divine—godlike zeal.

192 Beacons of hope—bright signals that fill us with hope.

193. Langour—dullness ; lethargy.



Langour is not in your heart—your hearts are always full of earnest zeal and energy.

194. Weakness is not in your word—your words are always full of encouragement.

195 Weariness not on your brow—you never appear fagged.

196 Alight in our van—descend from heaven and station yourselves in the forefront of our line.

At your voice—whenever you speak.

197 Panic—paralyzing fear.

198. Move through the ranks—mix with the common men.

Recall—summon up from behind.

199 Stragglers—those who lag behind and cannot keep pace with the main army.

Outworn—those who are too tired.

200 Reinspire—infuse fresh courage into.

201. Order—preserve order    Courage—encourage

Return—go back to heaven.

202 Eyes rekindling—looks reviving with hope and courage

Follow your steps as ye go—attend you as you return to heaven.

204. Fill up the gaps in our file—take the places of those who have fallen in the army.

205 Strengthen the wavering line—encourage those who are faltering.

206. Establish—i.e., make us persevere in it.

207. Bound—extremity

The waste—the desolate region ; i.e., the doubt, difficulties and dangers of life

208 The City of God—i.e., Heaven.

**Explanation: Lines 188—208.**—So when weak timid man needs your help and guidance so much, you appear among men as divine guides glowing with godlike zeal and serving as bright signals of hope and courage. Your heart is always full of courage and resolution; your words are always full of strength and encouragement; your looks are always fresh and cheefrul. You are our leaders. Whenever you speak, fear and despair vanish. You mix with the common men, summon up those who lag behind, give fresh strength to those who are tired, commend and put fresh courage into those who are brave; preserve order among them, encourage them and then return in triumph to your bright abode in Heaven. And when you depart from life, the grateful looks and the prayers of the whole race of man attend you. You take the places of those among them who have dropped down dead in the struggle, and encourage the whole weary band to persevere in their march, to toil on until they come to the end of their difficulties and enter Heaven.

---

377.

## THE TOYS.

(Page 444.)

### Introduction.

This poem is a sort of allegory comparing men, with their worldly pursuits, to children playing with toys. Just as children's toys are things that are quite valueless in the eyes of grown-up people, but are valuable possessions in the case of the children themselves, in the same way, the worldly pursuits in which men engage in life appear of great consequence to them but are trifles in the estimation of God.

### Notes.

1. Looked from thoughtful eyes—looked pensive or melancholy.

2. In quiet grown-up wise—quietly like a grown-up man. Wise—‘manper.’

3 My law—my order.

The seventh time—for the seventh time. ‘Seven’ is used indefinitely here for ‘several times.’

4. Struck—punished, thrashed

Dismissed—sent him away from my presence.

5. Hard words—a scolding.

6. Who was patient—who did not remonstrate with me for my having beaten the child

9. Slumbering deep—sleeping soundly.

10. Darkened—closed in sleep.

Their lashes—his eyelashes.

11. From his late sobbing wet—moist with the tears he had just been shedding.

12. With moan—with a sigh.

13. Kissing away his tears—drying his tears with my kisses.

Left others of my own—moistened his cheek with my own tears.

16. Counters—small pieces of metal, formerly used for counting.

Red-veined stone—a pebble with faint red streaks on it.

17. Abraded—rubbed smooth. Beach—seashore.

19. Bluebells—a kind of flower, called also campanuli.

20. Ranged—arranged. With careful art—neatly.

24. Lie with tranced breath—i.e., die

25. Not vexing thee in death—not troubling thee any more by our disobedience of Thy commandments.

26. Toys—trifling things.

- 27 We made our joys—we took delight in—  
 28. Weakly—imperfectly.  
 29. Thy great commanded good—thy high labours which were meant for our good.  
 30. Fatherly—affectionately like a father ; the word is here used as an adverb.

Not less than I—as affectionately as I did in the case of my child.

31. Moulded from the clay—created out of dust.  
 32. Leave thy wrath—not feel angry.  
 33. Their childishness—i.e., their childish love for trifling worldly objects.

#### Explanation

My little son looked melancholy and moved about and poke as gravely as a grown-up man, because having disobeyed my order several times, he had received a thrashing and scolding, and had been sent away from my room. His mother, by the way, did not remonstrate with me for the beating, because she was dead. After a little while I was afraid lest his sorrow might deprive him of sleep. So I went over to his bedside, and was quite surprised to find him sleeping soundly, with his eyelids closed, and his eyelashes still moist with tears. I was so touched that I dried his tears by my kisses, and could not help shedding tears of my own. For I noticed that on a table drawn close to his head he had neatly arranged a box of counters, a pebble with red streaks, a piece of glass that had been rounded smooth by the action of water on the seashore, six or seven shells, a bottle of bluebells and two French copper coins. All these toys he had collected near him to soothe his heart in his sorrow. I was greatly moved at this sight, and so when I prayed to God that night I shed tears and said, “When it is time for us to die, and to cease disobeying thy commandments mayst thou be reminded,

O God, how men are in the habit of pursuing trifling objects in this world, and how imperfectly they understand thy high behests which are meant for our good ! So just as I, thy creature, dealt affectionately with my son, so thou, O God, deal affectionately with us, Thy children ; do not be angry with us, but pardon us for what was only due to our childish ignorance."

## LIVES OF POETS.

---

1. Keats.—John Keats was born in London in 1793. He lived only upto the age of 26, and yet in this brief time—his 'mature career extending over some five years only—he became one of the first of English poets. He was pre-eminently the poet of beauty—the foremost representative of that rarefied and controlled sensuousness which, rightly or wrongly, is considered to be of Greek origin. Perhaps two-thirds of his poetry we could well afford to lose, but the remaining third is indeed invaluable.) In his first two books, the *Poems*, published in 1817, and *Endymion*, published in 1818, there is much that is immature in thought and imperfect in style. Yet the latter volume contains the *Hymn to Pan*, and the former the noble sonnet, *On first looking into Chapman's Homer*, which is universally acknowledged to be one of the finest sonnets in the English language. The remainder alluded to consists of a few Odes, the fragmentary *Hyperion*, the *Eve of St. Agnes*, a few sonnets and a ballad. The odes to Autumn, the Nightingale, on a Grecian Urn, and to Melancholy, are very nearly perfect,—as perfect as mortal work can ever be. The influence of Keats upon later English poetry has been almost incalculable; to him, for example, Tennyson and Rossetti turned for model. "The sculptor's sense of form, the painter's dream of colour, the musician's ecstasy in perfected sound, are all here."

2. Wordsworth.—William Wordsworth was born in 1770. He was the son of an attorney. In 1787 he proceeded to the University, where he joined St. John's College, Cambridge, but where he made no mark. Like many of his generation he was filled with enthusiasm for the French Revolution, and after taking his degree he resided for more than a year in France. In 1797 he became acquainted with

Coleridge. In 1798 appeared a small volume entitled *Lyrical Ballads*, containing the poems of the two friends. After making a tour in Germany with Coleridge, he went to reside in Grasmere, removing to Allan Bank in 1808. There also resided or visited, Southey, Coleridge, De Quincey, and Wilson; and it was to this congregation of kindred poetical spirits that the term "Lake School" was applied by the reviewers. Against those reviewers, and against a public that regarded their works with indifference, Wordsworth and the Lake Poets struggled until 1813, by which time the poetic genius of himself and his disciples began to be recognised. In 1813 he settled at Rydalmount which continued to be his residence until his death. He held for sometime the office of Distributor of stamps for the county of Westmoreland. In 1842 he was granted a pension of £300 per annum; and in 1843 he succeeded Southey as poet-laureate. Next to Shakspeare, Wordsworth is the great source of familiar quotations.

His most famous poems are the *Excursion*, *the Prelude*, *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, and *Sonnets*.

"His austere purity and perfection of language, the wide-ness of his range, the freshness of his thought, the unfailing certainty of his eye, his unswerving truth, and above all his magnificent gift of imagination, entitle him to a high rank among British poets. The one predominant note in his poetry is his love of nature."

3. Shelley.—(Nos. 59 and 75)—Percy Bysshe Shelley, eldest son of Sir Timothy Shelley, was born in the county of Sussex on the 4th of August 1792. He was educated at Eton and at University College, Oxford; but was expelled from Oxford in 1811 on account of his authorship of a tract on *Atheism*. In the same year he married Harriet Westbrook, a girl of 16, daughter of a coffee-house keeper, but separated from her, in 1814. His intimacy with Mary

Godwin led to a marriage with her after his first wife's death in 1816. In 1817 he was deprived by Lord Eldon of the custody of his first children, and in 1818 he left for Italy, in which country he resided, mainly at Naples, Leghorn, and Pisa, till his death by drowning in the Gulf of Spezia, on July 8, 1822. The following are the most important of his poems—*Queen Mab* (1813), *Alastor* (1816), *The Revolt of Islam* (1818), *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), *Epipsychidion* and *Adonais* (1821).

Shelley as a poet is the object of extreme judgments of both kinds. Swinburne speaks of him in the following words —

“Shelley out-sang all poets on record but some two or three throughout all time; his depths and heights of inner and outer music are as divine as nature's, and not sooner exhaustible. He was alone the perfect singing-god, his thoughts, words, deeds, all sang together.....The master-singer of our modern race and age, the poet beloved above all other poets, being beyond all other poets—in one word, and the only proper word—*divine*.”

4. Coleridge. (No. 6) — Samuel Taylor Coleridge, a celebrated English poet and philosopher, was born on 21st October 1772. At the early age of nine he lost his parents. Owing to an early disappointment in love, he enlisted as a soldier, but his friends procured his release, and he then went to Bristol and started a periodical called the *Watchman* which soon died. With several friends, among whom was Southey, he proposed to emigrate for America and found a settlement where the highest ideal of human life should be realized; but the project was never carried out. In 1795 he married Sarah Friker, whose sister married Southey on the same day. He then settled in a cottage at the foot of the Quantock Hills in Somersetshire, where in conjunction with Wordsworth, who was his neighbour, he formed the plan of the famous *Lyrical Ballads*. In 1798, through the kind liberality of a friend, he was enabled to visit Germany, in



company with Wordsworth, and studied the German literature for some time. On his return he took up his residence at the Lakes where both Southey and Wordsworth had settled. He died in 1835—

The dreamy and transcendental character of Coleridge's poetry eminently exhibits the man. In his best moments he has a fine sublimity of thought and expression not surpassed by Milton himself, but he is often turgid and verbose. As a critic, his work is of the highest rank, combining a comprehensive grasp of large principles and singularly subtle insight into details.

5 Emerson. Ralph Waldo Emerson, an American poet and philosopher, was born in 1803. In 1833 he made a tour through Europe, and visited England, where he made the acquaintance of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Landor and Carlyle. Between Carlyle and himself a lifelong friendship existed. On his return to America he published his earliest and perhaps most important work, the tractate on *Nature*. His first series of *Essays* appeared in 1841, and a second series in 1844. His *Poems* were published in 1847, and in the same year he paid his second visit to England in the form of a lecturing tour—a visit whose chief result was the publication of his famous *English Traits* in 1856. In 1850 he wrote another famous book, *Representative Men*. He died in 1882.

"The key to Emerson's mental position is to be found in his intense individualism. . . His style is difficult, mainly by reason of its aphoristic form and his neglect of those conventional phrases by the use of which less condensed writers disguise their transitions from one idea to another. For metrical harmonies Emerson had evidently no sure ear, but some of his poems are perfect even from a formal point of view."

6. Tennyson.—Alfred Lord Tennyson was born on August 6, 1809 at Somersby in Lincolnshire, of which his father was rector. The scenery surrounding his home,

in all its details, is pictured over and over again in his poems. At the age of seven, he was sent to the Louth Grammar School, from which he returned after a few years and received private instruction from his father. In 1822 he entered Trinity College, Cambridge. A year before, he published a small book of verses which he called *Poems by two Brothers*, having been joined in it by his elder brother Charles. While at the University he wrote a poem on *Timbuctoo* which won the Chancellor's gold medal, in 1829. Here he formed an intimate friendship with Arthur Henry Hallam (second son of Hallam the author of *Constitutional History*), a friendship which lasted only five years, for his friend died in 1833. Tennyson has immortalised his memory in his *In Memoriam*, the finest elegy in the English language. In 1830 appeared his *Poems, chiefly Lyrical*, and two years later another volume of poems, which now established his fame, though his best works were yet to appear, for the *Idylls of the King* were published between 1859 and 1885. In 1850 on the death of Wordsworth, he was appointed poet-laureate. In 1874 he was made Baron of Aldworth and Farringford, his two seats in Sussex and the Isle of Wight. He died in 1892.

"In strength and in weakness, in range and in limitation, he is essentially the poet of Victorian England. he depicts its landscape, he describes its character, he deals by preference with the topics in which it is interested: his poetry, more than that of any among his contemporaries, is the outcome and expression of the intellectual progress of his age.... No poet ever understood more fully the 'glory of words', none has sounded a music more rich, varied, more pure in style, more beautiful in colour and tone. To study him is to learn the possibilities of our native speech: to love him is an artistic education."

7. **Browning, Robert.**—Robert Browning, one of the greatest poets of the nineteenth century, was born on the 7th of May 1812. After completing his education at

University College, London, he went to Italy where he made diligent study of its mediæval history and the life of the people. In 1846 he married Elizabeth Barrett, and thereafter resided chiefly in Italy, making occasional visits to England. His first poem, *Pauline*, was published in 1833, *Strafford*, one of his best known tragedies, in 1837. From that date on to 1889, the year of his death, he continued to publish poems without interruption, among the most important of these being *the Ring and the Book*. In 1882 the Oxford University conferred upon him the degree of D. C. L. He died on the 12th December 1889.

"If we were called upon to describe Browning's poetic genius in one phrase, we should say it consisted of an almost unlimited power of imagination exerted upon real things." His poems are often difficult to understand, from the quick transitions of thought, and they are not infrequently rugged and harsh in expression.

8 Clough.—Arthur Hugh Clough was born at Liverpool on the 1st of January 1819. He studied under Dr. Arnold at Rugby, and then proceeded to Oxford, where he highly distinguished himself. He was Principal of University Hall, London, for some time afterwards. On his return from a tour in America (1853) he was appointed an examiner attached to the educational branch of the Privy Council Office. He died at Florence on November 13, 1861, "before he had subdued his sensitive temperament to the sterner requirements of his art." His poems were chiefly written between 1840 and 1850, the *Bothie* being published in 1848, and many of the shorter poems appearing in a volume called *Annamarvelia* in the next year.

"Doubt and struggle are the very substance of Clough's poetry, they give it strength; they impose upon it the limitations from which it suffers. Clough has never been a popular poet, and it may be doubted if he ever will be. His poetry has too much of the element of conflict, too

much uncertainty, ever to become, what the best of it ought to become, a household word. But from beginning to end it exhibits that devotion to truth which was in a special degree the characteristic of the finer minds of his epoch." (—Ward).

9. George Eliot.—George Eliot was the pseudonym of Mary Evans, a female English novelist, who was born in 1819, and first appeared as a writer in 1846, when she brought out a translation of Strauss's *Leben Jesu*. In 1849 her father died, and she then travelled on the Continent, living for sometime at Geneva. After returning to England she was assistant-editor of the *Westminster Review*. In 1853 she formed an acquaintance with George Henry Lewes, with whom she afterwards formed a union which existing circumstances prevented from being legalised as marriage. The union amply satisfied both parties. From July to March 1855 they were at Weimar and Berlin, Lewes preparing for his *Life of Goethe*. She wrote much while on the Continent, but her great works were yet to appear. In 1858 her first great novel *Adam Bede* was published, and this work at once placed George Eliot with the greatest English novelists. In 1860 appeared her *Mill on the Floss*, and next year her better known *Silas Marner*. In 1862-63 appeared *Romola*, and three years later *Felix Holt*. In 1874 she published a volume of verses. Her works are indeed too numerous to be mentioned in detail.

As a poet George Eliot never shows the ready spontaneity, the overflow of fervour, characteristic of a true poet.

She died in 1880.

10. Matthew Arnold.—Matthew Arnold was born at Laleham, near Staines, in the county of Middlesex, on the 24th of December 1822. He was the eldest son of Dr. Thomas Arnold, the famous Head master of Rugby. His mother, whose maiden name was Mary Penrose, was a woman of remarkable character and intellect, with whom

Matthew Arnold kept up to the day of her death an intellectually sympathetic as well as tenderly affectionate correspondence. In August 1836 he was sent to Winchester School from which, next year, he was removed to his father's school, Rugby. In 1841 he entered the university of Oxford. He lost his father in 1842. In 1843 he won the Newdigate prize for a poem on "Cromwell". After taking his degree, and winning his Fellowship, Matthew Arnold returned to Rugby, and taught classics in the fifth form. In 1847 he was made private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, then President of the Council in the administration of Lord John Russell. On the 14th of April 1851, he was appointed by Lord Lansdowne to an Inspectorship of Schools, which he retained for 35 years. On the 10th of June of the same year he married Frances Lucy Wightman, the daughter of a Judge. On the 5th of May 1857, Arnold was elected by Convocation to the Professorship of Poetry at Oxford, carrying a salary of one hundred pounds a year. Although he retained his Professorship for ten years, he disliked the title of Professor, and never resided in Oxford, he wished to be considered a man of letters and of the world. At the beginning of 1858 he took a small house in Chester Square, and for the first time acquired a settled home. Both he and his wife were fortunately fond of travelling. In January 1859 he was appointed Foreign Assistant Commissioner on Education to visit France, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland and Piedmont. On his return to England he joined the Queen's Westminster Volunteers. In 1862 he was re-elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford for another term of five years. In 1867 he retired from Oxford but remained an Inspector of Schools. Arnold had now a European reputation as a man of letters, and at the beginning of 1869 the Italian government proposed to him that Prince Thomas of Savoy the Duke of Genoa, should live with the Arnolds at Harrow while he attended the school. The proposal was accepted, and Matthew Arnold soon became very fond of the prince. For this service Matthew Arnold

received from the King of Italy "the order of Commander of the Crown of Italy." In 1873 Matthew Arnold removed from Harrow to Pain's Hill, Cobham, Surrey, which was his home for the remainder of his life. On the 30th of April 1886 he resigned his Inspectorship. He was offered a pension of £250, which he accepted after some hesitation. After his resignation he used his freedom to write more on politics, and his pen was never idle. His general health was good, though he had been warned of hereditary weakness in the heart which made any sudden or great exertion dangerous. While at Liverpool with his wife on Sunday the 15th of April 1888, he ran to catch a tramcar, and died in a moment. He had gone to meet his elder daughter on her way home from the United States, and in the delighted expectation of seeing her he passed away. Few knew anything of his malady, and he looked perfectly healthy. He was sixty-five at the time of his death.

11. **Coventry Patmore.**—Coventry Kersey Dighton Patmore was an English poet and critic, born in 1823. In 1844 he published a volume of *Poems*, full of originality of style and thought. From 1846 to 1866 he was an assistant Librarian in the British Museum. During these twenty years he published many poems, such as *The Angel in the House*, *the Betrothal*, *the Espousals*, *Faithful for Ever*, &c,—poems which display great depth and tenderness of thought and idealising love, and giving charming pictures of English scenery and of domestic life. In 1877 he published *The Unknown Eros*, a collection of poems with lofty themes and of fine metrical construction. In 1878 he published *Amelia*, which was considered by the poet his best work.

He died in 1896.

## QUESTIONS FOR EXAMINATION.,

1. What is the central thought of the sonnet, *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer*?

2. Define a sonnet, and point out its chief literary characteristics and its distinctive metrical structure. Illustrate your remarks from the above sonnet by Keats.

3. Explain, noting the points of comparison.—  
 "Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
 When a new planet swims into his ken."

4. What do you regard as the distinctive merit of Keats's poetry? In what respect does he differ from Wordsworth?

5. Explain in connection with the context:—

(a) A violet by a mossy stone,  
 Half-hidden from the eye!  
 —Fair as a star, when only one  
 Is shining in the sky.

(b) And beauty born of murmuring sound  
 Shall pass into her face.

6. Give a brief analysis of Wordsworth's poem, *The Education of Nature*.

7. What truths regarding Night and Sleep does Shelley draw out in his poem *To the Night*?

8. What inferences can you draw regarding Shelley's poetry from the poems you have in your course?

9. What is the central thought of the Sonnet, *To a Distant Friend*?

10. Explain fully the metaphors in the following:—  
 'Before high-piled books, in character  
 Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain.'

11. What do you mean by *Desideria*? Justify the title as given by Wordsworth to one of the sonnets in your course.

12. Give an analysis of Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*, stanza by stanza. What does the poet mean by calling Duty the *daughter of the voice of God*?

13. Explain in connection with the context :—

(a) Glad hearts ' without reproach or blot,  
Who do thy work, and know it not.

(b) When love is an unerring light;  
And joy its own security.

(c) No sport to every random gust,  
Yet being to myself a guide.

(d) Me this unchartered freedom tires,  
I feel the weight of chance desires.

(e) Stern Lawgiver ! yet thou dost wear  
The Godhead's most benignant grace.

14. Compare the three sonnets on London by Wordsworth. Why is the second one addressed to Milton? What particular evil does the poet condemn in these pieces?

15. Explain :—

(a) We must run glittering like a brook  
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest.

(b) Plain living and high thinking are no more.

(c) Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart.

Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea.  
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free.

(d) What wonder if a Poet now and then,  
Among the many movements of his mind,  
Felt for thee as a lover or a child !

16. What is the "Lesson" that Wordsworth draws from the habits of the lesser celandine?

17. Explain in connection with the context :—



To be a prodigal's favourite,—then, worse truth,  
A miser's pensioner—behold our lot !  
O man ! that from thy fair and shining youth  
Age might but take the things Youth needed  
not !

18. To whom is the poem entitled, *Invocation*, addressed ? And why and on what ground is the invocation made ?

19. Explain :—

(a) Like many a voice of one delight—  
The wind's, the bird's, the ocean-flood's—  
The City's voice itself is soft like Solitude's.

(b) Nor that content, surpassing wealth,  
The sage in meditation found,  
And walked with inward glory crowned.

(c) To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

20. What peculiarity in Shelley's mental attitude does (c) above illustrate ?

21. Explain the significance of the epithets 'Ethereal minstrel' and 'pilgrim of the sky,' as applied by Wordsworth to the skylark.

22. Explain :—

'A privacy of glorious light is thine.'

23. In what respect may the Skylark be fitly called—  
"Type of the wise, who soar, but never  
soam—

True to the kindred points of Heaven and  
Home !"

24. What was the special occasion of the sonnet,  
*Upon Westminster bridge* ? Explain :—

"This City now doth like a garment wear  
The beauty of the morning."

25. Explain in connection with the context :—

Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still !

26 Who was Ozimandias of Egypt ? What does Shelley's sonnet say about him ?

27. Explain in connection with the context :—

(a) Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides.

(b) For old unhappy far-off things,  
And battles long ago.

28 What is the main idea of Wordsworth's sonnet on *Sleep* ? Comment on the following line :—

'And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.'

29 Give the substance of Wordsworth's poem, the *Inner Vision*.

30. Explain —

Whatever the senses take or may refuse,—  
The Mind's internal heaven shall shed her dews  
Of inspiration on the humblest lay.

31. Explain in connection with the context.—

(a) And 'tis my faith that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes.

(b) If this belief from heaven be sent,  
If such be Nature's holy plan,  
Have I not reason to lament  
What Man has made of Man ?

32. Write a short essay on Wordsworth's attitude towards Nature and towards Man, illustrating your remarks by quotations from the poems in your course.

33 Explain fully the allegory in Keats' sonnet, entitled *The Human Seasons*.

34 Give a brief summary of Wordsworth's *Ode on Immortality*, stanza by stanza. What is the leading idea of the poem ?

35. Explain in connection with the context :—

- (a) But yet I know, where'er I go,  
That there hath past away a glory from the  
earth.
- (b) Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting ;  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting  
And cometh from afar——&c.
- (c) Filling from time to time his ' humorous stage '  
With all the Persons, down to palsied Age.
- (d) Mighty Prophet ! Seer blest !  
On whom those truths do rest  
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,  
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave.
- (e) But for those obstinate questionings  
Of sense and outward things,  
Failings from us, vanishings,  
Blank misgivings of a creature  
Moving about in worlds not realized.
- (f) In the soothing thoughts that spring  
Out of human suffering ,  
In the faith that looks through death,  
In years that bring the philosophic mind.
- (g) Thanks to the human heart by which we live.
- (h) To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears

*Sub*  
X36. Who was Sir Galahad ? Give a brief sketch of his character as drawn by Tennyson in the poem of that title. What type of man does he represent ?

X37. Explain —

- X(a) But all my heart is drawn above,  
My knees are bowed in crypt and shrine.
- X(b) And stricken by an angel's hand,  
This mortal armour that I wear,  
This weight and size, this heart and eyes,  
Are touched, are turned to finest air.

38. Explain —

But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand  
And the sound of a voice that is still !

39. What evils does Tennyson wish to expel, and what good to introduce in the New Year ?

40. Explain —

(a) Stanza (4).

(b) Stanza (6).

41. What do you know of the Revival of Learning ?  
What part did the Grammarian play in the movement ?

42. Give a brief sketch of Browning's *Grammarian*.

43. Explain in connection with the context :—

(a) Long he lived nameless : how should spring  
take note

Winter would follow ?

(b) Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,  
Still, there's the comment.

(c) Image the whole, then execute the parts—  
Fancy the fabric  
Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from  
—quartz,  
Ere mortar dab brick.

(d) He said, ' What's Time ? leave Now for dogs  
and apes !  
Man has Forever.

(e) He would not discount life, as fools do here,  
Paid by instalment !  
He ventured neck or nothing—Heaven's  
success  
Found, or earth's failure.

f) That low man seeks a little thing to do

.....  
Seeking shall find him. (Lines 113—124).

44. State as briefly as you can the philosophy of  
*Rabbi Ben Ezra*.

45. Who was Rabbi Ben Ezra? What is the chief point of his philosophy of life?

46. Explain in connection with the context:—

(a) Stanza 6

(b) Stanza 7.

(c) Stanza 23, 24, 25

47 Explain fully the metaphor of the Potter's wheel, as employed by Browning in his *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.

✓ 48 What is the subject of Browning's poem *Pros-  
pice*? Comment on it

Int ✓ 49. Explain —

The power of the night, the press of the storm,  
The post of the foe,

Where he stands, the Arch-Fear in a visible form,  
Yet the strong man must go

50. What is the central idea of Clough's poem, beginning 'Say not the struggle naught availeth'? Explain fully the last stanza.

51 What is the "choir invisible"? What, according to George Eliot, is the real meaning of living in heaven?

52. Explain in connection with the context —

(a) To make undying music in the world,  
Breathing as beauteous order that controls  
With growing away the growing life of man.

(b) And all our rare, better, truer self,  
That sobbed religiously in yearning song, &c.

53. Matthew Arnold says of Shakespeare

"Others abide our question Thou art free"

Why is this so? With what does he compare Shakespeare? Explain the comparison in detail

54 Explain fully the significance of each of the words of the following line, as applied to Shakespeare —

'Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self secure'

55. What is the dominating idea of Matthew Arnold's poem on 'Morality'?

56. Explain fully :—

(a) Stanza 1.

(b) Stanza 4.

57. What is the subject of the poem *Rugby Chapel*?

Explain :—

What is the course of the life  
Of mortal man on the earth?—  
Most men caddy about  
Here and there—eat and drink,  
Chatter and love and hate, &c.  
.....  
Glut the devouring grave!

58. Explain :—

Then, in such hour of need  
Of your fainting dispirited races,  
Ye like angels appear,  
Radiant with ardour divine.  
.....  
On to the City of God.

59. State briefly the purport of Patmore's poem, *the Toys*.

60. Explain :—

Ah, when at last we lie with tranced breath,  
Not vexing thee in death,  
And thou rememberest of what toys  
We made our joys

.....  
"I will be sorry for their childishness."

61. State what you know of the following writers, naming and briefly characterizing the more important of their works :—Shelley, Browning, Matthew Arnold.

(B. A. Exam., 1917).

62. With regard to *any three* of the following, give the special subject of the poem, and show how it is worked out as the poem proceeds — *Ode to Duty*, *To the Skylark*, *Ring out, wild bells*, *Morality*, *The Human Seasons*

(*B A. Exam.*, 1917).

63. Explain *any three* of the following passages in connexion with the poems from which they are taken —

- ✓ (a) The budding twigs spread out their fan  
To catch the breezy air,  
And I must think, do all I can,  
That there was pleasure there.  
If this belief from heaven be sent  
If such be Nature's holy plan,  
Have I not reason to lament  
What man has made of Man?
- (b) And thou whose head did stars and sunbeams  
know,  
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-  
secure,  
Didst walk on earth unguessed at—better so  
- All pains the immortal spirit must endure,  
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which  
bow,  
Find their sole voice in that victorious brow.
- (c) Rejoice we are allied  
To That which doth provide  
And not partake, effect and not receive!  
A spark disturbs our clod  
- Nearer we hold of God  
- Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must  
believe.
- ✓ (d) Thou little child yet glorious in the might  
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,  
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke  
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,  
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?

Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly  
freight,  
And custom lie upon thee with a weight  
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as loss :

---

THE END



